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COVENTRY PATMORE

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SELECTED POEMS
OF
COVENTRY PATMORE

Edited with an introduction

by

DEREK PATMORE



CHATTO AND WINDUS
LONDON

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*I have respected posterity ; and should there
be a posterity which cares for letters, I dare
to hope that it will respect me.*

COVENTRY PATMORE

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Introduction

Coventry Patmore cared little for the crowd. And it is probably because of his complete withdrawal from public life during the last years of his life, when his poetical work was finished, that so little is known or remembered of his personality. In many ways, Patmore was one of the strangest and most fascinating of all the Victorian writers, but, like Tennyson, he suffered from the age in which he lived, and preferred to hide his real self from the world.

To those privileged few, still living, who knew him, Coventry Patmore remains a dominant and vivid memory. Posterity has been left two portraits of the man in his old age—Sargent's brilliant portrait in the National Portrait Gallery, where he stands, more like a prophet than a poet, with an air of almost arrogant detachment, an apocalyptic figure austere remote from the typical Victorian

scene ; and Francis Thompson's description of him in his ' Victorian Ode ' :

Last came a shadow tall, with drooping lid,
Which yet not hid
The steel-like flashing of his armed glance ;
Alone he did advance,
And all the throng gave room
For one that looked with such a captain's mien.
A scornful smile lay keen
On lips, that living, prophesied of doom.
His hand held a lightning-bolt ; the other
A cup of milk and honey blent with fire ;
It seemed as in that quire
He had not, nor desired not, any brother.

But there was another Coventry Patmore, a gentler and kinder man, a man who loved and suffered, the poet who wrote ' The Azalea ' and ' Departure,' a young man who was obsessed with the study of Love. And a knowledge of both sides of this very complex character is essential to an appreciation and understanding of Patmore's verse. The following brief biographical sketch is an attempt to give some impression of his life and character.

Coventry Kersey Dighton Patmore was born on July 23rd, 1823, at Woodford, in Essex. He

was the son of Peter George Patmore, a discriminating man of letters, with a certain amount of money, who frequented most of the important 'salons' of his time. Patmore's early life was comparatively untroubled. His father was quick to recognize his unusual literary gifts, and did everything in his power to encourage him.

At the age of sixteen, he was sent to the Collège de France. He remained in Paris only a short time, but while he was studying there he fell in love with the daughter of Mrs. Charles Gore, a popular novelist of the day who held a smart, rather flashy salon in the Place Vendôme. Patmore, at this age, was a shy and awkward boy, and Miss Gore merely laughed at his infatuation. However, the unfortunate love affair made a deep impression on the young man, and he began to write verse. He was twenty-one in 1844, when his first book of poems was published by Moxon.

The poems achieved a considerable success among the critics, despite the fact that *Blackwood's Magazine* hailed them as 'the life into which the slime of the Keatses and Shelleys

of former times have fecundated.' Through his father, who knew most of the writers of the day, Coventry Patmore immediately took his place in literary circles. He was regarded as a coming poet, and his verses won him the appreciation and friendship of Browning, Lord Houghton, and Tennyson.

Scarcely had the poems appeared when the young poet was overwhelmed with financial difficulties. Peter Patmore having gambled very heavily in railway shares, suddenly left the country and settled in France, leaving his son to take care of himself. Patmore was penniless, but several of his friends came to his assistance. Thackeray managed to procure work for him on the various literary papers, and Lord Houghton secured him the post of Assistant Librarian to the British Museum, where he remained for twenty years.

He was twenty-four when he met Miss Emily Augusta Andrews, the lady who was to become famous as 'The Angel in the House.' They soon fell in love with each other. She was twenty-three, a beautiful girl, with finely chiselled features, great brown eyes, and hecti-

cally flushed cheeks which foretold her early death. She read Latin, Greek and French—an unusual accomplishment for those days ; and she knew and admired his poems !

And on a May day, while they were walking across the slopes of Hampstead, he proposed to her and was accepted. They made a handsome couple, for Patmore, at this period, looked the romantic young poet. He was tall and elegantly slim with a sensitive, intellectual face and long auburn hair.

For years the young poet had been obsessed with the subject of Love. Now he *was* in love. All his latent passion and mysticism was aroused, and, fired with ecstasy, he wrote to his betrothed :

I have been meditating a poem for you ; but I am determined not to give you anything I write unless it is the best thing I have written. O, how much the best it ought to be if it would do justice to its subject.

During their engagement, which followed, he sent Miss Andrews his own copy of Emerson's *Essays*, for which he had a great admiration,

asking her to mark the passages of which she specially approved or disapproved. To his delight, the young lady marked all the passages he admired. In the September of 1847, a few months after he had proposed, they were married at St. John's Church, Hampstead.

Coventry Patmore's philosophy of marriage was original. He regarded marriage between a man and a woman as the earthly symbol of the marriage between God and the Soul. To him, it was a sacrament, in which the flesh and the spirit were welded into one magnificent unity. His own marriage immediately kindled his poetic inspiration, and he began work on a great poem which was to glorify married love and expound the mystery of Marriage in its highest and most spiritual form. Out of this idea sprang his famous poem 'The Angel in the House,' the first part of which was published seven years after his marriage to Emily Andrews.

Their married life was exquisitely happy. They adored each other, and the young husband kept a private 'Liber Amoris,' in which he recorded infinite gratitude for his

talented and devoted wife. When Emily Patmore died at the age of thirty-seven she became enshrined in Patmore's memory as the personification of all that was loveliest in life. For him she remained for ever :

Like a young apple tree, in flushed array
Of white and ruddy flower, auroral, gay.

Emily Patmore, while she lived, was the centre of a brilliant group of writers and painters. Tennyson was captivated by her 'splendid appearance,' and both Ruskin and Carlyle were among her vehement admirers. Robert Browning has written her portrait in 'A Face,' which was published in *Dramatis Personæ*, and Millais painted a brilliant portrait of her at the height of her youth. She must have been the model Victorian wife : intelligent, charming, submissive, a devoted mother, full of matronly dignity, though perhaps a little lacking in humour—Jane Carlyle remarked spitefully that she was always trying to look like Woolner's medallion of her. Her letters to her children, however, show her charmingly human and affectionate, with a

whimsical wit. She loved her husband completely, and, when she was very ill, she gave up the comfort of their small house and lived in rooms in Percy Street so that Patmore should be able to devote all his time to finishing the long poem on which he was working—‘The Angel in the House.’

In late years, after he had become a Roman Catholic, Coventry Patmore regarded her as a saint. He always kept the anniversary of her death as a day of seclusion, self-examination, and prayer, and often told his children, when they hesitated over prayers to our Lady, ‘Pray to your mother, if you like that better.’

Emily Patmore’s death in 1862 left Patmore utterly broken.

The publication of the completed ‘The Angel in the House,’ after a mild reception, had now brought its author world-wide fame. The English reading public had been slow at first to appreciate the poem, but in the United States its success was sensational. Emerson wrote Patmore the following letter :

I think there never was so sudden a public formed for itself by any poem as here exists

for 'The Angel in the House'; which was read and published by acclamation of a few, before yet anyone had heard or guessed the name of the author; and since our edition was out is known and loved and recited by young and old, an ever enlarging company.

I give you joy and thanks as the maker of this beautiful poem, and pray you to make no delay and print the promised 'Espousals.' I try to give myself importance among my friends as one who has known the author and has owed to him valued attentions.¹

Rumours of the poem's great transatlantic success rapidly reached England, and it was not long before 'The Angel in the House' was the only rival of Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King.' Ruskin took every opportunity at his lectures of furthering its popularity, and Tennyson, Browning and Carlyle were loud in its praise.

It was an empty success for Patmore. His wife was dead. He felt lost and utterly alone. He withdrew from the brilliant circles in which

¹ 'The Angel in the House' was first published anonymously in both countries, owing to the unpopularity of his father at the time.

he had moved with his adored Emily, and tried to forget. His rooms at 14, Percy Street and their memories became intolerable to him.

For two years he lived in seclusion. He saw only his most intimate friends, and tried pathetically to look after his six motherless children. But he felt little sympathy for them and, although he tried hard, could never really understand them. His poem 'The Toys,' written about this period, is a tragic testimony to the fact. Death having robbed him of Love, Patmore turned his attention to Religion. He had always been deeply religious, but it now attracted him all the more strongly. In 1864, he accepted the invitation of one of his best friends, Aubrey de Vere, a devout Roman Catholic, and travelled with him to Rome.

The death of Emily Patmore closes a definite chapter in Coventry Patmore's life. With this event he shed a number of friendships, many of which he never resumed: among them his much-discussed friendship with Tennyson.

He first met Tennyson in the winter of 1845. Patmore, then a young man of twenty-two, had just published his first poems. Tennyson, who

was thirty-six, was in a very neurotic condition ; Hallam had died many years ago, but was still a distracting memory, and after many bitter attacks, his own fame was beginning to rise again.

They became great friends, and during the years 1845-52 Tennyson exerted a great influence over Patmore. The younger man, besides genuinely admiring him, was flattered at being intimate with so famous a poet, and Tennyson undoubtedly enjoyed having so young and brilliant a disciple and companion. The two friends would go for long walks at night, a habit which Patmore retained all his life, and the latter records that Tennyson would remain deep in thought for hours without uttering a word. But the disciple was content. He humoured the older poet's moods and as he wrote to his wife :

In Tennyson I perceive a nature higher and wider than my own ; at the foot of which I can sit happily and with love. . . . It is a great good to me to find that I have my superior, which I have never found in the company of anyone else.

At other times, Tennyson would read his young friend's work and suggest revisions. Much of 'The Angel in the House' bears the influence of Tennyson, and Patmore admitted that he owed a great deal to the maturer poet's sense of style and form.

In later years, both poets seem to have resented the friendship and drifted apart. Patmore's pride was annoyed by the knowledge that he had been so completely under the influence of another man's intellect, and Tennyson probably resented the younger poet's fame and popularity. Many years later, in 1881, Coventry Patmore made a tentative gesture of friendship in a letter, but Tennyson showed no desire to resume it, and wrote a frigid reply. Their former great intimacy might never have existed.

Patmore's journey to Rome in 1864 marks a turning-point in his career. He had long felt a deep urge towards the Roman Catholic Church. But his desire had been checked by Emily Patmore, who had a Puritanical fear and hatred of Rome. One of her last remarks to her husband was : 'When I am gone, they

(the priests) will get you, and then I shall see you no more !’

Aubrey de Vere was determined that his friend should enjoy his visit, and Patmore soon found himself launched on English and Roman Society. He had been a recluse for two years. He was captivated by Rome. In his letters home he is full of enthusiasm for Catholicism, and the learning and distinction of the Cardinals and priests. ‘ I feel quite disgusted at being a heretic !’ he wrote, and a little later :

Of all the characteristics of what I will call Roman Catholic manners, the most attractive to me is the essentially *un-English* absence of reserve in speaking of subjects of the dearest and highest interest, combined with the equally un-English absence of cant.

Already he was beginning to weigh the arguments in favour of his conversion.

Then Patmore met Miss Marianne Byles. He was instantly attracted. She was intelligent with a quiet distinction that almost amounted to beauty, and she was a devout Catholic. Patmore wrote in his enthusiasm :

I had never beheld so beautiful a personality, and this beauty seemed to be the pure effluence of Catholic Sanctity.

Miss Byles herself was fascinated and quite overwhelmed by her admirer's brilliance and romantic appearance. By now, Patmore's head had a maturity that emphasized the magnificent modelling of his features, and the drooping eyelid over one of his eyes and wilful passionate mouth gave his face a sardonic and arresting expression.

But she was a Roman Catholic and he was still a heretic. No further impetus was needed. He went to the priest with whom he had already been holding conversations on the subject, confessed, and was received into the Roman Catholic Church. A little later, they became engaged.

A slight comedy ensued. Coventry Patmore had thought that Miss Byles was the travelling companion of a rich friend. He now discovered that Miss Byles was herself the rich friend ! His pride was hurt. He left Rome hurriedly and declared that he could marry no woman in these circumstances. Immediately, several

friends followed him and persuaded him of his folly. He returned to Rome. A few months afterwards, they were married in London by Cardinal Manning himself.

The ensuing years were comparatively happy for Patmore. He was famous. He was married again to a charming, cultivated and submissive wife. He was now rich enough to satisfy all his whims, and owing to ill-health, he had moved to the country, and bought a large and beautiful estate in Sussex—his favourite county. Finally, his turbulent, passionate spirit had found security and peace in the doctrines of Catholic theology.

The estate, which Patmore had bought and renamed Heron's Ghyll, was run-down and neglected, and it fell to its new owner to reorganize it completely on an economic basis. Patmore settled down to live the life of a country squire, and attacked his task with remarkable efficiency. Tennyson Patmore, my grandfather, has left an amusing sketch of life at Heron's Ghyll at this period. Like other eminent Victorians, Coventry Patmore, as he grew older, became something of an autocrat.

The life of the whole household at Heron's Ghyll revolved round the great man, whose wishes were law. Life was very regular. Each morning, Patmore rose at seven and went to hear Mass in his private chapel. He always wore the same kind of clothes, a velvet tailed coat and the old type of Victorian stand-up loose collar with horizontally tied black tie. Every evening, the family, which included his three daughters, of whom he was very fond, and any visitors there might be, gathered round the great fireplace in the hall, and he would play a game of whist. Then, perhaps, one of his daughters would read to him. He liked the good modern novels of the day ; he was particularly fond of Thomas Hardy, and considered Henry James the greatest novelist of his period. At ten o'clock he made the family and visitors retire for the night, and, as my grandfather wistfully remarks, ' Not much nightcap beverage was offered ! '

All his family was a little afraid of him. He was so reserved and self-sufficient that he found it difficult to break down the barriers between himself and his children. But he tried, and at

times could be extraordinarily tender and sympathetic, though, as one of the children remarks : ‘ We were all in awe of him always. Rose up when he entered the room, and each of us in the morning would receive rather a stereotyped kiss.’

Patmore could not help his aloofness. The outside world mattered very little to him now. He was wrapt in contemplation and was becoming more and more absorbed in the mysticism that obsessed him until his death. He read a great deal in the privacy of his study. St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bernard, St. John of the Cross, and such poets as Crawshaw, were all pondered over and underlined. After an exhaustive course of reading he began writing verse, and started his best work—the Odes.

In 1868, he had written nine odes. They were completely different from his earlier work ; the metres he used were more subtle and more advanced than those in ‘ The Angel in the House.’ In April of this year he had these odes privately printed, and copies sent out to all his friends. The poems were simply bound in pale green covers and were signed ‘ C. P.’ The

Odes met with little response even from his best friends and most devoted admirers. Those who had enjoyed the charming homely sentiments of 'The Angel in the House' failed to appreciate the fineness and great originality of Patmore's new verse. He was bitterly disappointed. Two years later, he collected the remainder of the edition, and one day sitting in front of the great fire in the hall, he burnt every copy that he had been able to find. According to Sir Edmund Gosse, this privately printed edition is probably the rarest of all Victorian editions.

However, Patmore went on writing in this 'catalectic' metre as he called it. Growing older, he had become very critical of his earlier work, and in 1873, he bought in all the remaining stock of 'The Angel in the House,' and burnt it on another bonfire. He then rewrote much of 'The Angel in the House,' which was later issued in the Collected edition of his poems, and is the version now in print. By 1877 he had written enough odes to warrant their publication, and in this year, in spite of the discouraging reception the private

edition had received, 'The Unknown Eros' appeared.

Meanwhile, Heron's Ghyll had become too expensive since he was continually adding and making alterations to it, and in 1874 he sold the estate to the Duke of Norfolk for £27,000, making a profit of £9,000. This is supposed to be one of the rare instances in which a poet has excelled in a business transaction. In fact, Patmore himself was so elated over his success as a landowner that he wrote and published a pamphlet entitled, 'On How I Managed and Improved my Estate !'

From 1875 onwards, Coventry Patmore's life becomes less and less eventful.

Years before, when he had been a young man madly in love with his first wife, they had spent their honeymoon at Hastings, and now, in 1875, he was offered the old Mansion House in this very town. Of course, he could not resist taking it. The poignant memory of the 'Angel' had never died. Hastings for him was still full of agreeable memories—tinged with melancholy. The thought of his first and great love still lingered in his mind,

as will be seen from many of his odes—notably ‘Tired Memory’ and ‘Amelia.’ Emily was still present in his thoughts, and Hastings brought back that enchanted past: half-forgotten walks across the Downs, small, and at the time exciting expeditions, happy days that he could no longer recapture. As far back as 1863, a year after her death, he had gone to stay at Hastings, and written to Dr. Garnett on the latter’s honeymoon:

I too am enjoying a honeymoon of memory and hope which it is my prayer that sixteen years’ probation may entitle you also to enjoy—without the drawback I suffer. I am in the same house and in the same rooms to which I brought my bride in 1847.

The Mansion House at Hastings is a lovely Queen Anne house with a great magnolia tree standing in front of it; here the poet and his family lived comfortably for the next sixteen years. Hastings and its surroundings reawakened Patmore’s inspiration. For several years, he had been on the point of despair, thinking that his Muse had deserted him. But this seaside town with all its senti-

mental memories inspired him. His powers had now reached maturity, and the Hastings period saw the production of most of his finest work. He was fifty-four. As Gosse writes :

His imagination, his mystical and religious vitalities were simultaneously quickened, and he walked the gorse-clad downs, muttering as a young man mutters, with joy uplifting his pulses and song breaking from his lips.

And Patmore himself notes down in 1877 :
'I have written as much in the last three weeks as the whole of the Nine Odes.'
'Amelia,' one of his longest and loveliest poems, and other important odes were all written about this time.

Coventry Patmore's Catholic conversion had undoubtedly estranged many of his old friends, and, by nature rather a recluse, he had not attempted to make any new ones. Now, after some years of neglect, Patmore's reputation as a poet began to rise again. A young generation of writers who had sneered at 'The Angel in the House' began to discover unsuspected beauties in 'The Unknown Eros,'

which Patmore himself considered to contain his best work. Among these writers was Gerard Manley Hopkins, whom Patmore met through Robert Bridges.

Hopkins admired the older poet, and they became good friends. Patmore was interested in Hopkins' mind and their common religious faith made a powerful link between them. In fact, Hopkins exerted a very strong religious influence over Patmore, and on several occasions Patmore bowed quite unnecessarily to the dogmatic opinions of the Jesuit.

Patmore's attitude towards his faith was very unorthodox. His own particular conception of Roman Catholicism frequently shocked and upset the Catholics of his day. Like many intellectuals, he resented any attempt to restrict his own free will and opinions, and in consequence he was perpetually in conflict with Catholic dogmatism. He interpreted the saying 'God is Love' in its most literal sense. To him the physical body was the temple of God, and the bodily union of man and woman was a holy sacrament. He exalted the flesh instead of despising it, and

in his last book he wrote : ' Lovers are nothing else than Priest and Priestess to each other of the Divine Manhood and the Divine Womanhood which are God.' Patmore, in his all-embracing Catholicism, would declare that the Greek sculptors, the poets of the Renaissance, and even Crebillon fils were all Catholic in their way ! Naturally, Hopkins considered this a dangerous doctrine, and on one occasion forced Patmore to destroy one of his finest works.

During his last years, encouraged by Gosse and others, Coventry Patmore started writing prose, and in 1883 he completed a very daring treatise called ' *Sponsa Dei*,' of which Sir Edmund wrote :

' The *Sponsa Dei*,' this vanished masterpiece, was not very long, but polished and modulated to the highest degree of perfection. No existing specimen of Patmore's prose seems to me so delicate, or penetrated by quite so high a charm of style as this lost book was. The subject of it was certainly audacious. It was no more or less than an interpretation of the love between the Soul and God by an analogy of the love between a woman and a

man ; it was, indeed, a transcendental treatise on Divine desire seen through the veil of human desire . . . the burning of 'Sponsa Dei' involved a distinct loss to literature.

Hopkins disapproved of the work and told Patmore that it ought to be burnt, saying : 'That's telling secrets.' He gave him the alternative of showing it to his religious director. Patmore's pride rebelled against this, and he burnt the manuscript. Hopkins repented of his advice when it was too late. This incident shows only too well the reason why many of Patmore's last poems were misunderstood, and even to-day, unless one takes into account Patmore's dark and complex mysticism, these poems—for example, the 'Eros and Psyche' Odes—will remain unintelligible.

Patmore made two other important friends at this period : Alice Meynell and Francis Thompson.

In 1880, Marianne Patmore, his second wife, died, and the following year he married an old friend of the family, Miss Harriet Robson. He was now nearly sixty. He had

written all the poetry he was ever going to write, though he was actually meditating a great poem in honour of the Virgin Mary, of which there remains only 'The Childe's Purchase.' But he was still as brilliant and vital as ever. When he was sixty, his third wife bore him a son, Francis, who became as he grew up his father's constant companion.

Undoubtedly Coventry Patmore's great friendship for Mrs. Meynell was one of the outstanding events in his later life. In Alice Meynell, he met for the first time a woman with a masculine mind, an intellectual and brilliant critic—a type very rare in Victorian times. To a man who had spent his life surrounded by Victorian domesticity she was overwhelmingly fascinating. And when she wrote to him :

I have never told you what I think of your poetry. It is the greatest thing in the world, the most harrowing and the sweetest. I can hardly realize that he who has written it and who is greater than his words is celestially kind to me and calls me friend,

he was overcome with happiness. Mrs. Meynell, with her talents as a poet and essayist and her brilliant charm, drew out all the gallantry and tenderness in his nature. For her sake, he entered the world again, and would come up to Palace Court from Lymington (where he had moved in 1891, being forced to give up his beloved house at Hastings), to take part in the gatherings and parties at the Meynells' home. In the public Press appeared the charming spectacle of two people of genius advocating each other's talents : on the vacancy of the Laureateship, Patmore wrote several articles advocating the appointment of Alice Meynell as Poet Laureate.

It is tragic that a friendship that began so auspiciously should pass under a cloud, but towards the end of his life Patmore felt that he had been supplanted in his friendship with Mrs. Meynell by George Meredith, and, although he corresponded with Wilfrid Meynell, he did not see her again.

He spent the last few years of his life at his house at Lymington—The Lodge, a large rambling old house overlooking the Solent.

His health was failing slowly, but he went on writing prose and produced two volumes, *Religio Poetae*, and *The Rod, The Root and The Flower*, the last being published a year before he died. These essays and *obiter dicta* were the final flowering of a magnificent talent. Vigorous and sometimes amazingly brilliant, his last writings show the wide range and startling originality of Patmore's intellect. Walter Pater wrote to him : 'Your essays are one more proof that true poets make excellent critics, and sometimes genuine connoisseurs of art.'

In 1896, he felt the end of his life was drawing near. He wrote to one of his sons in May : 'I am dying slowly. It is a very uncomfortable process.'

One early morning in November of the same year, he passed away in a cardiac syncope. His illness had only lasted a few days, but his complaint was angina pectoris, and the attack had come suddenly. As he lay dying, the priest, who was also a friend, was so overcome with emotion that he could not read out the words of the prayer for the

dying, and Coventry Patmore asked for the prayer book and read the prayer himself. Then lighting an imaginary cigarette, he spoke his last words: 'I love my God best.' He lies buried in Lymington churchyard, wrapt, at his own request, in the habit of the Franciscan Order.

* * *

There is no denying that the tide of criticism hurled at 'The Angel in the House' in the seventies, when its immense popular success had turned the critics against it, dealt Patmore's reputation a blow from which it has never properly recovered. So strong was this reaction that to-day Coventry Patmore is generally remembered only as the author of 'The Angel in the House,' and 'The Unknown Eros,' his finest work, is neglected. Like many other writers and poets, Patmore was very unequal. Many passages in 'The Angel in the House' reach bathos, but in his best work, such as 'Amelia,' 'The Azalea,' 'Departure,' and other odes in 'The Unknown Eros,' he reaches a perfection of form and a simple directness of emotion that justify him a per-

manent place in English letters. As Gosse remarks :

‘ Amelia ’ gives evidence of a talent for interpreting in most dignified language the homely emotions of mankind which might have drawn the whole world to acknowledge Patmore’s genius if he could have brought himself to exercise it frequently.

But Coventry Patmore did not care about the public. He disliked the age in which he lived intensely, and wrote entirely to please himself. He was one of the most conscientious of the Victorian poets. He was quite justified in declaring : ‘ I have left the world nothing but my best.’

* * *

There is no chronological order in the following selection from Coventry Patmore’s poems. In the past, the length and popularity of ‘ The Angel in the House ’ have drawn the attention of the reading public away from ‘ The Unknown Eros ’ and obscured the brilliance of this, his greatest work, on which his claim to immortality rests. So in the

present selection, these Odes are given pride of place. Already they have been hailed as the work of a genius by such discriminating critics abroad as Paul Claudel and André Gide.

From 'The Angel in the House,' I have used only some of the Preludes, and three other extracts, as it is almost impossible to select passages from a long narrative poem, and these will serve to give the reader a taste of its quality. Moreover, there are several popular editions of 'The Angel in the House' still in print for those who wish to read the poem in its entirety.

In the case of some of Patmore's earlier poems, such as 'Eros,' I have gone to the original edition and printed the poet's first version. Patmore, in later years, altered many of his earliest poems, not always to their advantage. The political odes are included more for their language and invective than for their political opinions. Patmore held very disillusioned and violent views about the statesmen of his day. He wrote of Gladstone : 'His leprosy is so perfect that men call him clean,' and of Disraeli : 'Year of the great

Crime¹ When the false English nobles with
their Jew, By God demented, slew The trust
they stood thrice pledged to keep from wrong ' !

The selection also includes two (hitherto only privately printed) poems to Alice Meynell. I have used these poems, since apart from their charm and finish, they show the poet in a rare, tender and human mood. The ode 'The Two Deserts' has been included as it is an interesting forerunner of a certain school of modern verse of which Mr. T. S. Eliot is the brilliant leader.

* * *

I am indebted to Mr. Wilfrid Meynell for his generous permission to use Emerson's and Pater's hitherto unpublished letters to Coventry Patmore, to Miss Viola Meynell for permission to quote a letter from her *Life of Alice Meynell*, to Mr. Francis Patmore for his approval of this selection. In the foregoing Introduction, I am deeply indebted to Sir Edmund Gosse's excellent *Life of Coventry Patmore* and to Mr. Basil Champney's monu-

¹ This refers to the Reform Bill of 1867, see p. 126.

mental *Memoirs and Correspondence*, without reference to which no biography of Patmore would be complete. I am also deeply grateful to several friends, including Louise Morgan, for their help in revising certain passages. Finally, I have drawn on family papers which have not been published before.

DEREK PATMORE

Proem

‘ **M**any speak wisely, some inerrably :
Witness the beast who talk’d that
should have bray’d,
And Caiaphas that said
Expedient ’twas for all that One should die ;
But what avails
When Love’s right accent from their wisdom
fails,
And the Truth-criers know not what they cry !
Say, wherefore thou,
As under bondage of some bitter vow,
Warblest no word,
When all the rest are shouting to be heard ?
Why leave the fervid running just when Fame
’Gan whispering of thy name
Amongst the hard-pleased Judges of the
Course ?
Parch’d is thy crystal-flowing source ?
Pierce, then, with thought’s steel probe, the
trodden ground,

Till passion's buried floods be found ;
Intend thine eye
Into the dim and undiscover'd sky
Whose lustres are the pulsings of the heart,
And promptly, as thy trade is, watch to chart
The lonely suns, the mystic hazes and throng'd
 sparkles bright
That, named and number'd right
In sweet, transpicuous words, shall glow alway
With Love's three-stranded ray,
Red wrath, compassion golden, lazuline de-
 light.'

Thus in reproof of my despondency,
My Mentor ; and thus I :

O, season strange for song !
And yet some timely power persuades my lips.
Is't England's parting soul that nerves my
 tongue,
As other Kingdoms, nearing their eclipse,
Have, in their latest bards, uplifted strong
The voice that was their voice in earlier days ?
Is it her sudden, loud and piercing cry,
The note which those that seem too weak to sigh
Will sometimes utter just before they die ?
Lo, weary of the greatness of her ways,

There lies my Land, with hasty pulse and hard,
 Her ancient beauty marr'd,
 And, in her cold and aimless roving sight,
 Horror of light ;
 Sole vigour left in her last lethargy,
 Save when, at bidding of some dreadful breath,
 The rising death
 Rolls up with force ;
 And then the furiously gibbering corse
 Shakes, panglessly convuls'd, and sightless
 stares,
 Whilst one Physician pours in rousing wines,
 One anodynes,
 And one declares
 That nothing ails it but the pains of growth.
 My last look loth
 Is taken ; and I turn, with the relief
 Of knowing that my life-long hope and grief
 Are surely vain,
 To that unshapen time to come, when She,
 A dim, heroic Nation long since dead,
 The foulness of her agony forgot,
 Shall all benignly shed
 Through ages vast
 The ghostly grace of her transfigured past

Over the present, harass'd and forlorn,
Of nations yet unborn ;
And this shall be the lot
Of those who, in the bird-voice and the blast
Of her omniloquent tongue,
Have truly sung
Or greatly said,
To shew as one
With those who have best done,
And be as rays,
Thro' the still altering world, around her
changeless head.

Therefore no 'plaint be mine
Of listeners none,
No hope of render'd use or proud reward,
In hasty times and hard ;
But chants as of a lonely thrush's throat
At latest eve,
That does in each calm note
Both joy and grieve ;
Notes few and strong and fine,
Gilt with sweet day's decline,
And sad with promise of a different sun.

'Mid the loud concert harsh
Of this fog-folded marsh,

To me, else dumb,
Uranian Clearness, come !
Give me to breathe in peace and in surprise
The light-thrill'd ether of your rarest skies,
Till inmost absolution start
The welling in the grateful eyes,
The heaving in the heart.
Winnow with sighs
And wash away
With tears the dust and stain of clay,
Till all the Song be Thine, as beautiful as
 Morn,
Bedeck'd with shining clouds of scorn ;
And Thou, Inspirer, deign to brood
O'er the delighted words, and call them Very
 Good.
This grant, Clear Spirit ; and grant that I
 remain
Content to ask unlikely gifts in vain.

From The Unknown Eros

The Azalea

There, where the sun shines first
Against our room,
She train'd the gold Azalea, whose perfume
She, Spring-like, from her breathing grace dis-
persed.

Last night the delicate crests of saffron bloom,
For this their dainty likeness watch'd and nurst,
Were just at point to burst.

At dawn I dream'd, O God, that she was dead,
And groan'd aloud upon my wretched bed,
And waked, ah, God, and did not waken her,
But lay, with eyes still closed,

Perfectly bless'd in the delicious sphere
By which I knew so well that she was near,
My heart to speechless thankfulness composed.

Till 'gan to stir

A dizzy somewhat in my troubled head—

It *was* the azalea's breath, and she *was* dead !
The warm night had the lingering buds dis-
closed,

And I had fall'n asleep with to my breast
A chance-found letter press'd
In which she said,
' So, till to-morrow eve, my Own, adieu !
Parting's well-paid with soon again to meet,
Soon in your arms to feel so small and sweet,
Sweet to myself that am so sweet to you ! '

From The Unknown Eros

Departure

It was not like your great and gracious ways !
Do you, that have nought other to lament,
Never, my Love, repent
Of how, that July afternoon,
You went,
With sudden, unintelligible phrase,
And frighten'd eye,
Upon your journey of so many days,
Without a single kiss, or a good-bye ?
I knew, indeed, that you were parting soon ;
And so we sate, within the low sun's rays,
You whispering to me, for your voice was weak,
Your harrowing praise.
Well, it was well,
To hear you such things speak,
And I could tell
What made your eyes a growing gloom of love,
As a warm South-wind sombres a March grove.
And it was like your great and gracious ways
To turn your talk on daily things, my Dear,

Lifting the luminous, pathetic lash
To let the laughter flash,
Whilst I drew near,
Because you spoke so low that I could scarcely
hear.

But all at once to leave me at the last,
More at the wonder than the loss aghast,
With huddled, unintelligible phrase,
And frighten'd eye,
And go your journey of all days
With not one kiss, or a good-bye,
And the only loveless look the look with which
you pass'd :
'Twas all unlike your great and gracious ways.

From The Unknown Eros ·

The Toys

My little Son, who look'd from thoughtful
eyes

And moved and spoke in quiet grown-up wise,
Having my law the seventh time disobey'd,
I struck him, and dismiss'd

With hard words and unkiss'd,
His Mother, who was patient, being dead.
Then, fearing lest his grief should hinder sleep,
I visited his bed,

But found him slumbering deep,
With darken'd eyelids, and their lashes yet
From his late sobbing wet.

And I, with moan,
Kissing away his tears, left others of my own ;
For, on a table drawn beside his head,
He had put, within his reach,
A box of counters and a red-vein'd stone,
A piece of glass abraded by the beach
And six or seven shells,
A bottle with bluebells

And two French copper coins, ranged there
with careful art,
To comfort his sad heart.
So when that night I pray'd
To God, I wept, and said :
Ah, when at last we lie with tranced breath,
Not vexing Thee in death,
And Thou rememberest of what toys
We made our joys,
How weakly understood,
Thy great commanded good,
Then, fatherly not less
Than I whom Thou has moulded from the clay
Thou'lt leave Thy wrath, and say,
' I will be sorry for their childishness.'

From The Unknown Eros

Tired Memory

The stony rock of death's insensibility
Well'd yet awhile with honey of thy love
And then was dry ;
Nor could thy picture, nor thine empty glove,
Nor all thy kind, long letters, nor the band
Which really spann'd
Thy body chaste and warm,
Thenceforward move
Upon the stony rock their wearied charm.
At last, then, thou wast dead.
Yet would I not despair,
But wrought my daily task, and daily said
Many and many a fond, unfeeling prayer,
To keep my vows of faith to thee from harm.
In vain.
' For 'tis,' I said, ' all one,
The wilful faith, which has no joy or pain,
As if 'twere none.'
Then look'd I miserably round
If aught of duteous love were left undone,

And nothing found.
But, kneeling in a Church, one Easter-Day,
It came to me to say :
‘ Though there is no intelligible rest,
In Earth or Heaven,
For me, but on her breast,
I yield her up, again to have her given,
Or not, as, Lord, Thou wilt, and that for aye.’
And the same night, in slumber lying,
I, who had dream’d of thee as sad and sick
 and dying,
And only so, nightly for all one year,
Did thee, my own most Dear,
Possess,
In gay, celestial beauty nothing coy,
And felt thy soft caress
With heretofore unknown reality of joy.
But, in our mortal air,
None thrives for long upon the happiest dream,
And fresh despair
Bade me seek round afresh for some extreme
Of unconceiv’d, interior sacrifice
Whereof the smoke might rise
To God, and ’mind Him that one pray’d below.
And so,

In agony, I cried :

‘ My Lord, if Thy strange will be this,
That I should crucify my heart,
Because my love has also been my pride,
I do submit, if I saw how, to bliss
Wherein She has no part.’

And I was heard,

And taken at my own remorseless word.

O, my most Dear,

Was't treason, as I fear ?

'Twere that, and worse, to plead thy veiled
mind,

Kissing thy babes, and murmuring in mine ear,

‘ Thou canst not be

Faithful to God, and faithless unto me !

Ah, prophet kind !

I heard, all dumb and blind

With tears of protest ; and I cannot see

But faith was broken. Yet, as I have said,

My heart was dead,

Dead of devotion and tired memory,

When a strange grace of thee

In a fair stranger, as I take it, bred

To her some tender heed,

Most innocent

Of purpose therewith blent,
And pure of faith, I think, to thee ; yet such
That the pale reflex of an alien love,
So vaguely, sadly shown,
Did her heart touch
Above
All that, till then, had woo'd her for its own.
And so the fear, which is love's chilly dawn,
Flush'd faintly upon lids that droop'd like thine,
And made me weak,
By thy delusive likeness doubly drawn,
And Nature's long suspended breath of flame
Persuading soft, and whispering Duty's name,
Awhile to smile and speak
With this thy Sister sweet, and therefore mine ;
Thy Sister sweet,
Who bade the wheels to stir .
Of sensitive delight in the poor brain,
Dead of devotion and tired memory,
So that I lived again,
And, strange to aver,
With no relapse into the void inane,
For thee ;
But (treason was't ?) for thee and also her.

From The Unknown Eros

‘ If I were Dead ’

‘ **I**f I were dead, you’d sometimes say, Poor
Child ! ’

The dear lips quiver’d as they spake,
And the tears brake
From eyes which, not to grieve me, brightly
smiled.

Poor Child, poor Child !

I seem to hear your laugh, your talk, your song.
It is not true that Love will do no wrong.
Poor Child !

And did you think, when you so cried and
smiled,

How I, in lonely nights, should lie awake,
And of those words your full avengers make ?
Poor Child, poor Child !

And now, unless it be
That sweet amends thrice told are come to thee,
O God, have Thou *no* mercy upon me !
Poor Child !

From The Unknown Eros

The Day after To-morrow

Perchance she droops within the hollow gulf
Which the great wave of coming pleasure
draws,

Not guessing the glad cause !

Ye Clouds that on your endless journey go,

Ye Winds that westward flow,

Thou heaving Sea

That heav'st 'twixt her and me,

Tell her I come ;

Then only sigh your pleasure, and be dumb ;

For the sweet secret of our either self

We know.

Tell her I come,

And let her heart be still'd.

One day's controlled hope, and then one more,

And on the third our lives shall be fulfill'd !

Yet all has been before :

Palm placed in palm, twin smiles, and words
astray.

What other should we say ?

18 THE DAY AFTER TO-MORROW

But shall I not, with ne'er a sign, perceive,
 Whilst her sweet hands I hold,
 The myriad threads and meshes manifold
 Which Love shall round her weave :
 The pulse in that vein making alien pause
 And varying beats from this ;
 Down each long finger felt, a differing strand
 Of silvery welcome bland ;
 And in her breezy palm
 And silken wrist,
 Beneath the touch of my like numerous bliss
 Complexly kiss'd,
 A diverse and distinguishable calm ?
 What should we say !
 It all has been before ;
 And yet our lives shall now be first fulfill'd,
 And into their summ'd sweetness fall distill'd
 One sweet drop more ;
 One sweet drop more, in absolute increase
 Of unrelapsing peace.

O, heaving Sea,
 That heav'st as if for bliss of her and me,
 And separatest not dear heart from heart,
 Though each 'gainst other beats too far apart,
 For yet awhile

Let it not seem that I behold her smile.
 O, weary Love, O, folded to her breast,
 Love in each moment years and years of
 rest,

Be calm, as being not.
 Ye oceans of intolerable delight,
 The blazing photosphere of central Night,
 Be ye forgot.
 Terror, thou swarthy Groom of Bride-bliss
 coy,

Let me not see thee toy.
 O, Death, too tardy with thy hope intense
 Of kisses close beyond conceit of sense ;
 O, Life, too liberal, while to take her hand
 Is more of hope than heart can understand ;
 Perturb my golden patience not with joy,
 Nor, through a wish, profane
 The peace that should pertain
 To him who does by her attraction move.
 Has all not been before ?

One day's controlled hope, and one again,
 And then the third, and ye shall have the rein,
 O Life, Death, Terror, Love !
 But soon let your unrestful rapture cease,
 Ye flaming Ethers thin,

20 THE DAY AFTER TO-MORROW

Condensing till the abiding sweetness win
One sweet drop more ;
One sweet drop more in the measureless
increase
Of honied peace.

From The Unknown Eros

A Farewell

With all my will, but much against my
heart,
We two now part.
My Very Dear,
Our solace is, the sad road lies so clear.
It needs no art,
With faint, averted feet
And many a tear,
In our opposed paths to persevere.
Go thou to East, I West.
We will not say
There's any hope, it is so far away.
But, O, my Best,
When the one darling of our widowhead,
The nursling Grief,
Is dead,
And no dews blur our eyes
To see the peach-bloom come in evening skies,
Perchance we may,
Where now this night is day,

And even through faith of still averted feet,
Making full circle of our banishment, •
Amazed meet ;
The bitter journey to the bourne so sweet
Seasoning the termless feast of our content
With tears of recognition never dry.

From The Unknown Eros

Tristitia

Darling, with hearts conjoin'd in such a
peace
That Hope, so not to cease,
Must still gaze back,
And count, along our love's most happy track,
The landmarks of like inconceiv'd increase,
Promise me this :
If thou alone should'st win
God's perfect bliss,
And I, beguiled by gracious-seeming sin,
Say, loving too much thee,
Love's last goal miss,
And any vows may then have memory,
Never, by grief for what I bear or lack,
To mar thy joyance of heav'n's jubilee.
Promise me this ;
For else I should be hurl'd,
Beyond just doom
And by thy deed, to Death's interior gloom,
From the mild borders of the banish'd world

Wherein they dwell
Who builded not unalterable fate
On pride, fraud, envy, cruel lust, or hate ;
Yet loved too laxly sweetness and heart's ease,
And strove the creature more than God to
 please.

For such as these
Loss without measure, sadness without end !
Yet not for this do thou disheaven'd be
With thinking upon me.
Though black, when scann'd from heaven's
 surpassing bright,
This might mean light,
Foil'd with the dim days of mortality.
For God is everywhere.
Go down to deepest Hell, and He is there, .
And, as a true but quite estranged Friend,
He works, 'gainst gnashing teeth of devilish ire,
With love deep hidden lest it be blasphemed,
If possible, to blend
Ease with the pangs of its inveterate fire ;
Yea, in the worst
And from His Face most wilfully accurst
Of souls in vain redeem'd,
He does with potions of oblivion kill

Remorse of the lost Love that helps them still.

Apart from these,
Near the sky-borders of that banish'd world,
Wander pale spirits among willow'd leas,
Lost beyond measure, sadden'd without end,
But since, while erring most, retaining yet
Some ineffectual fervour of regret,
Retaining still such weal
As spurned Lovers feel,
Preferring far to all the world's delight
Their loss so infinite,
Or Poets, when they mark
In the clouds dun
A loitering flush of the long sunken sun,
And turn away, with tears into the dark.

Know, Dear, these are not mine
But Wisdom's words, confirmed by divine
Doctors and Saints, though fitly seldom heard
Save in their own prepense-occulted word,
Lest fools be fool'd the further by false hope,
And wrest sweet knowledge to their own decline ;

And (to approve I speak within my scope)
The Mistress of that dateless exile gray
Is named in surpliced Schools *Tristitia*.

But, O, my Darling, look in thy heart and see
How unto me,
Secured of my prime care, thy happy state,
In the most unclean cell
Of sordid Hell,
And worried by the most ingenious hate,
It never could be anything but well,
Nor from my soul, full of thy sanctity,
Such pleasure die
As the poor harlot's, in whose body stirs
The innocent life that is and is not hers :
Unless, alas, this fount of my relief
By thy unheavenly grief
Were closed.
So, with a consecrating kiss
And hearts made one in past all previous peace,
And on one hope reposed,
Promise me this !

From The Unknown Eros

Saint Valentine's Day

Well dost thou, Love, thy solemn Feast to
hold

In vestal February ;
Not rather choosing out some rosy day
From the rich coronet of the coming May,
When all things meet to marry !

O, quick, prævernal Power
That signall'st punctual through the sleepy
mould

The Snowdrop's time to flower,
Fair as the rash oath of virginity
Which is first-love's first cry ;

O, Baby Spring,
That flutter'st sudden 'neath the breast of Earth
A month before the birth ;
Whence is the peaceful poignancy,
The joy contrite,
Sadder than sorrow, sweeter than delight,
That burthens now the breath of everything,
Though each one sighs as if to each alone

The cherish'd pang were known ?
At dusk of dawn, on his dark spray apart,
With it the Blackbird breaks the young Day's
heart ;

In evening's hush
About it talks the heavenly-minded Thrush ;
The hill with like remorse
Smiles to the Sun's smile in his westerling
course ;

The fisher's drooping skiff
In yonder sheltering bay ;
The choughs that call about the shining cliff ;
The children, noisy in the setting ray ;
Own the sweet season, each thing as it may ;
Thoughts of strange kindness and forgotten
• peace

In me increase ;
And tears arise
Within my happy, happy Mistress' eyes,
And, lo, her lips, averted from my kiss,
Ask from Love's bounty, ah, much more than
bliss !

Is't the sequester'd and exceeding sweet
Of dear Desire electing his defeat ?
Is't the waked Earth now to yon purpling cope

Uttering first-love's first cry,
 Vainly renouncing, with a Seraph's sigh,
 Love's natural hope?
 Fair-meaning Earth, foredoom'd to perjury!
 Behold, all amorous May,
 With roses heap'd upon her laughing brows,
 Avoids thee of thy vows!
 Were it for thee, with her warm bosom near,
 To abide the sharpness of the Seraph's sphere?
 Forget thy foolish words;
 Go to her summons gay,
 Thy heart with dead, wing'd Innocencies fill'd,
 Ev'n as a nest with birds
 After the old ones by the hawk are kill'd.

Well dost thou, Love, to celebrate
 The noon of thy soft ecstasy,
 Or e'er it be too late,
 Or e'er the Snowdrop die!

From The Unknown Eros

Eurydice

Is this the portent of the day nigh past,
And of a restless grave
O'er which the eternal sadness gathers fast ;
Or but the heaped wave
Of some chance, wandering tide,
Such as the world of awe
Whose circuit, listening to a foreign law,
Conjunctures ours at unguess'd dates and wide,
Does in the Spirit's tremulous ocean draw,
To pass unfateful on, and so subside ?
Thee, whom ev'n more than Heaven loved I
 have,
And yet have not been true
Even to thee,
I, dreaming, night by night, seek now to see,
And, in a mortal sorrow, still pursue
Thro' sordid streets and lanes
And houses brown and bare
And many a haggard stair
Ochrous with ancient stains,

And infamous doors, opening on hapless rooms,
In whose unhaunted glooms
Dead pauper generations, witless of the sun,
Their course have run ;
And ofttimes my pursuit
Is check'd of its dear fruit
By things brimful of hate, my kith and kin,
Furious that I should keep
Their forfeit power to weep,
And mock, with living fear, their mournful
malice thin.

But ever, at the last, my way I win
To where, with perfectly sad patience, nurst
By sorry comfort of assured worst,
Ingrain'd in fretted cheek and lips that pine,
On pallet poor
Thou lyest, stricken sick,
Beyond love's cure,
By all the world's neglect, but chiefly mine.
Then sweetness, sweeter than my tongue can
tell,
Does in my bosom well,
And tears come free and quick
And more and more abound
For piteous passion keen at having found,

After exceeding ill, a little good ;
A little good
Which, for the while,
Fleets with the current sorrow of the blood,
Though no good here has heart enough to smile.

From The Unknown Eros

Eros

Bright thro' the valley gallops the brooklet ;
Over the welkin travels the cloud ;
Touched by the zephyr, dances the harebell ;
 Cuckoo sits somewhere, singing so loud ;
Swift o'er the meadows glitter the starlings,
 Striking their wings all the flock at a stroke ;
Under the chestnuts new bees are swarming,
 Rising and falling like magical smoke :
Two little children, seeing and hearing,
 Hand in hand wander, shout, laugh and sing :
Lo, in their bosoms, wild with the marvel,
 Love, like the crocus, is come ere the Spring.
Young men and women, noble and tender,
 Yearn for each other, faith truly plight,
Promise to cherish, comfort and honour ;
 Vow that makes duty one with delight.
Ah, but the glory, found in no story,
 Radiance of Eden, unquenched by the Fall,
Few may remember, none may reveal it,
 This the First-love, the first love of all.

From Tamerton Church-Tower

Amelia

When e'er mine eyes do my Amelia greet
It is with such emotion
As when, in childhood, turning a dim street,
I first beheld the ocean.

There, where the little, bright, surf-breathing
town,
That shew'd me first her beauty and the sea,
Gathers its skirts against the gorse-lit down
And scatters gardens o'er the southern lea,
Abides this Maid
Within a kind, yet sombre Mother's shade,
Who of her daughter's graces seems almost
afraid,
Viewing them ofttimes with a scared forecast,
Caught, haply, from obscure love-peril past.
Howe'er that be,
She scants me of my right,
Is cunning careful evermore to balk
Sweet separate talk,
And fevers my delight

By frets, if, on Amelia's cheek of peach,
I touch the notes which music cannot reach,
Bidding ' Good-night ! '

Wherefore it came that, till to-day's dear date,
I curs'd the weary months which yet I have to
• wait

Ere I find heaven, one-nested with my mate.

To-day, the Mother gave,
To urgent pleas and promise to behave
As she were there, her long-besought consent
To trust Amelia with me to the grave
Where lay my once-betrothed, Millicent :
' For,' said she, hiding ill a moistening eye,
' Though, Sir, the word sounds hard,
God makes as if He least knew how to guard
The treasure He loves best, simplicity.'

And there Amelia stood, for fairness shewn
Like a young apple-tree, in flush'd array
Of white and ruddy flow'r, auroral, gay,
With chilly blue the maiden branch between ;
And yet to look on her moved less the mind
To say ' How beauteous ! ' than ' How good
and kind ! '

And so we went alone
By walls o'er which the lilac's numerous plume

Shook down perfume ;
Trim plots close blown
With daisies, in conspicuous myriads seen,
Engross'd each one
With single ardour for her spouse, the sun ;
Garths in their glad array
Of white and ruddy branch, auroral, gay,
With azure chill the maiden flow'r between ;
Meadows of fervid green,
With sometime sudden prospect of untold
Cowslips, like chance-found gold ;
And broadcast buttercups at joyful gaze,
Rending the air with praise,
Like the six-hundred-thousand-voiced shout
Of Jacob camp'd in Midian put to rout ;
Then through the Park,
Where Spring to livelier gloom
Quicken'd the cedars dark,
And, 'gainst the clear sky cold,
Which shone afar
Crowded with sunny alps oracular,
Great chestnuts raised themselves abroad like
 cliffs of bloom ;
And everywhere,
Amid the ceaseless rapture of the lark,

With wonder new
We caught the solemn voice of single air,
'Cuckoo !'

And when Amelia, 'bolden'd, saw and heard
How bravely sang the bird,
And all things in God's bounty did rejoice,
She who, her Mother by, spake seldom word,
Did her charm'd silence doff,
And, to my happy marvel, her dear voice
Went as a clock does, when the pendulum's off.
Ill Monarch of man's heart the Maiden who
Does not aspire to be High-Pontiff too !
So she repeated soft her Poet's line,
'By grace divine,
Not otherwise, O Nature, are we thine !'
And I, up the bright steep she led me, trod,
And the like thought pursued
With, 'What is gladness without gratitude,
And where is gratitude without a God ?'
And of delight, the guerdon of His laws,
She spake, in learned mood ;
And I, of Him loved reverently, as Cause,
Her sweetly, as Occasion of all good.
Nor were we shy,
For souls in heaven that be

May talk of heaven without hypocrisy.

And now, when we drew near
The low, gray Church, in its sequester'd dell,
A shade upon me fell.

Dead Millicent indeed had been most sweet,
But I how little meet

To call such graces in a Maiden mine !

A boy's proud passion free affection blunts ;
His well-meant flatteries oft are blind affronts ;
And many a tear

Was Millicent's before I, manlier, knew
That maidens shine

As diamonds do,

Which, though most clear,

Are not to be seen through ;

And, if she put her virgin self aside

And sate her, crownless, at my conquering feet,
It should have bred in me humility, not pride.

Amelia had more luck than Millicent :

Secure she smiled and warm from all mischance
Or from my knowledge or my ignorance,
And glow'd content

With my—some might have thought too much
—superior age,

Which seem'd the gage

Of steady kindness all on her intent.
Thus nought forbade us to be fully blent.

While, therefore, now
Her pensive footsteps stirr'd
The darnell'd garden of unheedful death,
She ask'd what Millicent was like, and heard
Of eyes like her's, and honeysuckle breath,
And of a wiser than a woman's brow,
Yet fill'd with only woman's love, and how
An incidental greatness character'd
Her unconsider'd ways.

But all my praise
Amelia thought too slight for Millicent,
And on my lovelier-freighted arm she leant,
For more attent ;
And the tea-rose I gave,
To deck her breast, she dropp'd upon the grave.
' And this was her's,' said I, decoring with a
band

Of mildest pearls Amelia's milder hand.
' Nay, I will wear it for *her* sake,' she said :
For dear to maidens are their rivals dead.

And so,
She seated on the black yew's tortured root,
I on the carpet of sere shreds below,

And nigh the little mound where lay that other,
I kiss'd her lips three times without dispute,
And, with bold worship suddenly aglow,
I lifted to my lips a sandall'd foot,
And kiss'd it three times thrice without dispute.
Upon my head her fingers fell like snow,
Her lamb-like hands about my neck she
wreathed.

Her arms like slumber o'er my shoulders crept,
And with her bosom, whence the azalea
breathed,

She did my face full favourably smother,
To hide the heaving secret that she wept !

Now would I keep my promise to her Mother ;
Now I arose, and raised her to her feet,
My best Amelia, fresh-born from a kiss,
Moth-like, full-blown in birthdew shuddering
sweet,

With great, kind eyes, in whose brown shade
Bright Venus and her Baby play'd !

At inmost heart well pleased with one
another,
What time the slant sun low
Through the plough'd field does each clod
sharply shew,

And softly fills
With shade the dimples of our homeward hills,
With little said,
We left the 'wilder'd garden of the dead,
And gain'd the gorse-lit shoulder of the down
That keeps the north-wind from the nestling
town,
And caught, once more, the vision of the wave,
Where, on the horizon's dip,
A many-sailed ship
Pursued alone her distant purpose grave ;
And, by steep steps rock-hewn, to the dim street
I led her sacred feet ;
And so the Daughter gave,
Soft, moth-like, sweet,
Showy as damask-rose and shy as musk,
Back to her Mother, anxious in the dusk.
And now ' Good-night ! '
Me shall the phantom months no more affright
For heaven's gates to open well waits he
Who keeps himself the key.

*From Amelia, Tamerton Church-Tower and
Other Poems*

To the Unknown Eros

What rumour'd heavens are these
Which not a poet sings,
O, Unknown Eros? What this breeze
Of sudden wings
Speeding at far returns of time from interstellar
space
To fan my very face,
And gone as fleet,
Through delicatest ether feathering soft their
solitary beat,
With ne'er a light plume dropp'd, nor any trace
To speak of whence they came, or whither they
depart?
And why this palpitating heart,
This blind and unrelated joy,
This meaningless desire,
That moves me like the Child
Who in the flushing darkness troubled lies,
Inventing lonely prophecies,
Which even to his Mother mild

He dares not tell ;
To which himself is infidel ;
His heart not less on fire
With dreams impossible as wildest Arab Tale,
(So thinks the boy,)
With dreams that turn him red and pale,
Yet less impossible and wild
Than those which bashful Love, in his own way
and hour,
Shall duly bring to flower ?
O, Unknown Eros, sire of awful bliss,
What portent and what Delphic word,
Such as in form of snake forebodes the bird,
Is this ?
In me life's even flood
What eddies thus ?
What in its ruddy orbit lifts the blood,
Like a perturbed moon of Uranus,
Reaching to some great world in ungauged
darkness hid ;
And whence
This rapture of the sense
Which, by thy whisper bid,
Reveres with obscure rite and sacramental sign
A bond I know not of nor dimly can divine ;

This subject loyalty which longs
For chains and thongs
Woven of gossamer and adamant,
To bind me to my unguess'd want,
And so to lie,
Between those quivering plumes that thro' fine
 ether pant,
For hopeless, sweet eternity?
What God unhonour'd hitherto in songs,
Or which, that now
Forgettest the disguise
That Gods must wear who visit human eyes,
Art Thou?
Thou art not Amor; or, if so, yon pyre,
That waits the willing victim, flames with
 vestal fire;
Nor mooned Queen of maids; or, if thou'rt she,
Ah, then, from Thee
Let Bride and Bridegroom learn what kisses be!
In what veil'd hymn
Or mystic dance
Would he that were thy Priest advance
Thine earthly praise, thy glory limn?
Say, should the feet that feel thy thought
In double-center'd circuit run,

In that compulsive focus, Nought,
In this a furnace like the sun ;
And might some note of thy renown
And high behest
Thus in enigma be expressed :
' There lies the crown
Which all thy longing cures.
Refuse it, Mortal, that it may be yours !
It is a Spirit, though it seems red gold ;
And such may no man, but by shunning, hold.
Refuse it, till refusing be despair ;
And thou shalt feel the phantom in thy hair.'

From The Unknown Eros

Eros and Psyche

‘**L**ove, I heard tell of thee so oft !
Yea, thrice my face and bosom flush’d
with heat
Of sudden wings,
Through delicatest ether feathering soft
Their solitary beat.
Long did I muse what service or what charms
Might lure thee, blissful Bird, into mine arms ;
And nets I made,
But not of the fit strings.
At last, of endless failure much afraid,
To-night I would do nothing but lie still,
And promise, wert thou once within my
window-sill,
Thine unknown will.
In nets’ default,
Finch-like me seem’d thou might’st be ta’en
with salt ;
And here—and how thou mad’st me start !—
Thou art.’

‘ O Mortal, by Immortals’ cunning led,
Who shew’d you how for Gods to bait you bed ?
Ah, Psyche, guess’d you nought
I craved but to be caught ?
Wanton, it was not you,
But I that did so passionately sue ;
And for your beauty, not unscath’d, I fought
With Hades, ere I own’d in you a thought !’

‘ O, heavenly Lover true,
Is this thy mouth upon my forehead press’d ?
Are these thine arms about my bosom link’d ?
Are these thy hands that tremble near my
heart,
Where join two hearts, for juncture more distinct ?
By thee and by my maiden zone caress’d,
What dim, waste tracts of life shine sudden,
like moonbeams
On windless ocean shaken by sweet dreams !
Ah, stir not to depart !
Kiss me again, thy Wife and Virgin too !
O Love, that, like a rose,
Deckest my breast with beautiful repose,
Kiss me again, and clasp me round the heart,
Till fill’d with thee am I

As the cocoon is with the butterfly !
—Yet how 'scape quite
Nor pluck pure pleasure with profane delight ?
How know I that my Love is what he seems !
Give me a sign
That, in the pitchy night,
Comes to my pillow an immortal Spouse,
And not a fiend, hiding with happy boughs
Of palm and asphodel
The pits of hell !'

' 'Tis this :

I make the childless to keep joyful house.
Below your bosom, mortal Mistress mine,
Immortal by my kiss,
Leaps what sweet pain ?
A fiend, my Psyche, comes with barren bliss,
A God's embraces never are in vain.'

' I own

A life not mine within my golden zone.
Yea, how
'Tis easier grown
Thine arduous rule to don
Than for a Bride to put her bride-dress on !
Nay, rather, now
'Tis no more service to be borne serene,

Whither thou wilt, thy stormful wings between.
But, Oh,
Can I endure
This flame, yet live for what thou lov'st me,
pure ? '

' Himself the God let blame
If all about him bursts to quenchless flame !
My Darling, know
Your spotless fairness is not match'd in snow,
But in the integrity of fire.
Whate'er you are, Sweet, I require.
A sorry God were he
That fewer claim'd than all Love's mighty
kingdoms three ! '

' Much marvel I
That thou, the greatest of the Powers above,
Me visitest with such exceeding love.
What thing is this ?
A God to make me, nothing, needful to his bliss,
And humbly wait my favour for a kiss !
Yea, all thy legions of liege deity
To look into this mystery desire.'

' Content you, Dear, with them, this marvel
to admire,
And lay your foolish little head to rest

On my familiar breast.

Should a high King, leaving his arduous throne,
Sue from her hedge a little Gipsy Maid,
For far-off royal ancestry bewray'd
By some wild beauties, to herself unknown ;
Some voidness of herself in her strange ways
Which to his bounteous fulness promised
dainty praise ;

Some power, by all but him unguess'd,
Of growing king-like were she king-caress'd ;
And should he bid his dames of loftiest grade
Put off her rags and make her lowlihead
Pure for the soft midst of his perfumed bed,
So to forget, kind-couch'd with her alone,
His empire, in her winsome joyance free ;
What would he do, if such a fool were she
As at his grandeur there to gape and quake,
Mindless of love's supreme equality,
And of his heart, so simple for her sake
That all he ask'd, for making her all-blest,
Was that her nothingness alway
Should yield such easy fee as frank to play
Or sleep delighted in her Monarch's breast,
Feeling her nothingness her giddiest boast,
As being the charm for which he loved her most ?

What if this reed,
Through which the King thought love-tunes
to have blown,
Should shriek, " Indeed,
I am too base to trill so blest a tone !"
Would not the King allege
Defaulted consummation of the marriage-
pledge,
And hie the Gipsy to her native hedge ?'
' O, too much joy ; O, touch of airy fire ;
O, turmoil of content ; O, unperturb'd desire,
From founts of spirit impell'd through brain
and blood !
I'll not call ill what, since 'tis thine, is good,
Nor best what is but second best or third ;
Still my heart fails,
And, unaccustom'd and astonish'd, quails,
And blames me, though I think I have not
err'd.
'Tis hard for fly, in such a honied flood,
To use her eyes, far more her wings or feet.
Bitter be thy behests !
Lie like a bunch of myrrh between my aching
breasts.
Some greatly pangful penance would I brave.

Sharpness me save

From being slain by sweet ! ’

‘ In your dell’d bosom’s double peace

Let all care cease !

Custom’s joy-killing breath

Shall bid you sigh full soon for custom-killing
death.

So clasp your childish arms again around my
heart :

’Tis but in such captivity

The unbounded Heav’ns know what they be !

And lie still there,

Till the dawn, threat’ning to declare

My beauty, which you cannot bear,

Bid me depart.

Suffer your soul’s delight,

Lest that which is to come wither you quite :

For these are only your espousals ; yes,

More intimate and fruitfuller far

Than aptest mortal nuptials are ;

But nuptials wait you such as now you dare
not guess.’

‘ In all I thee obey ! And thus I know
That all is well :

Should’st thou me tell

Out of thy warm caress to go
And roll my body in the biting snow,
My very body's joy were but increased ;
More pleasant 'tis to please thee than be
pleased.

Thy love has conquer'd me ; do with me as
thou wilt,

And use me as a chattel that is thine !
Kiss, tread me under foot, cherish or beat,
Sheathe in my heart sharp pain up to the hilt,
Invent what else were most perversely sweet ;
Nay, let the Fiend drag me through dens of
guilt ;

Let Earth, Heav'n, Hell

'Gainst my content combine ;

What could make nought the touch that made
thee mine !

Ah, say not yet, farewell !'

'Nay, that's the Blackbird's note, the sweet
Night's knell.

Behold, Beloved, the penance you would
brave !'

'Curs'd when it comes, the bitter thing we
crave !

Thou leav'st me now, like to the moon at dawn,

A little, vacuous world alone in air.

I will not care !

When dark comes back my dark shall be with-
drawn !

Go free ;

For 'tis with me

As when the cup the Child scoops in the sand
Fills, and is part and parcel of the Sea.

I'll say it to myself and understand.

Farewell !

Go as thou wilt and come ! Lover divine,
Thou still art jealously and wholly mine ;
And this thy kiss

A separate secret by none other scann'd ;
Though well I wis

The whole of life is womanhood to thee,
Momently wedded with enormous bliss.

Rainbow, that hast my heaven sudden spann'd,
I am the apple of thy glorious gaze,
Each else life cent'ring to a different blaze ;
And, nothing though I be

But now a no more void capacity for thee,
'Tis all to know there's not in air or land
Another for thy Darling quite like me !

Mine arms no more thy restless plumes compel !

Farewell !

Whilst thou art gone, I'll search the weary
meads

To deck my bed with lilies of fair deeds !
And, if thou choose to come this eventide,
A touch, my Love, will set my casement wide.
Farewell, farewell !

Be my dull days

Music, at least, with thy remember'd praise !'

' Bitter, sweet, few and veil'd let be
Your songs of me.

Preserving bitter, very sweet,

Few, that so all may be discreet,

And veil'd, that, seeing, none may see.'

From The Unknown Eros

De Natura Deorum

‘ **G**ood-morrow, Psyche ! What’s thine
errand now ?

What awful pleasure do thine eyes bespeak,
What shame is in thy childish cheek,
What terror on thy brow ?

Is this my Psyche, once so pale and meek ?
Thy body’s sudden beauty my sight old
Stings, like an agile bead of boiling gold,
And all thy life looks troubled like a tree’s
Whose boughs wave many ways in one great
breeze.’

‘ O Pythoness, to strangest story hark :
A dreadful God was with me in the dark—’

‘ How many a Maid—
Has never told me that ! And thou’rt afraid—’

‘ He’ll come no more,
Or come but twice,
Or thrice,
Or only thrice ten thousand times thrice o’er ! ’

‘ For want of wishing thou mean’st not to miss.

We know the Lover, Psyche, by the kiss ! ’

‘ If speech of honey could impart the sweet,
The world were all in tears and at his feet !
But not to tell of that in tears come I, but this :
I’m foolish, weak, and small,
And fear to fall.

If long he stay away, O frightful dream, wise
Mother,
What keeps me but that I, gone crazy, kiss
some other ! ’

‘ The fault were his ! But know,
Sweet little Daughter sad,
He did but feign to go ;
And never more
Shall cross thy window-sill,
Or pass beyond thy door,
Save by thy will.
He’s present now in some dim place apart
Of the ivory house wherewith thou mad’st him
glad.
Nay, this I whisper thee,
Since none is near,
Or, if one were, since only thou could’st hear,
That happy thing which makes thee flush and
start,

Like infant lips in contact with thy heart,
Is He ! ’

‘ Yea, this I know, but never can believe !
O, hateful light ! when shall mine own eyes
mark

My beauty, which this victory did achieve ? ’

‘ When thou, like Gods and owls, canst see
by dark.’

‘ In vain I cleanse me from all blurring
error—’

‘ ’Tis the last rub that polishes the mirror.’

‘ It takes fresh blurr each breath which I
respire.’

‘ Poor Child, don’t cry so ! Hold it to the fire.’

‘ Ah, nought these dints can e’er do out
again ! ’

‘ Love is not love which does not sweeter live
For having something dreadful to forgive.’

‘ Sadness and change and pain
Shall me for ever stain ;
For, though my blissful fate
Be for a billion years,
How shall I stop my tears
That life was once so low and Love arrived
so late ! ’

‘Sadness is beauty’s savour, and pain is
The exceedingly keen edge of bliss ;
Nor, without swift mutation, would the heav’ns
be aught.’

‘How to behave with him I’d fain be taught.
A maid, meseems, within a God’s embrace,
Should bear her like a Goddess, or, at least, a
Grace.’

‘When Gods, to Man or Maid below,
As men or birds appear,
A kind ’tis of incognito,
And that, not them, is what they choose we
should revere.’

‘Advise me what oblation vast to bring,
Some least part of my worship to confess !’

‘A woman is a little thing,
And in things little lies her comeliness.’

‘Must he not soon with mortal tire to toy ?’

‘The bashful meeting of strange Depth and
Height

Breeds the forever new-born babe, Delight ;
And, as thy God is more than mortal boy,
So bashful more the meeting, and so more the
joy.’

‘He loves me dearly, but he shakes a whip

Of deathless scorpions at my slightest slip.
Mother, last night he call'd me "Gipsy," so
Roughly it smote me like a blow !

Yet, oh,

I love him, as none surely e'er could love
Our People's pompous but good-natured Jove.
He used to send me stately overture ;
But marriage-bonds, till now, I never could
endure !'

' How should great Jove himself do else than
miss

To win the woman he forgets to kiss ;
Or, won, to keep his favour in her eyes,
If he's too soft or sleepy to chastise !
By Eros, her twain claims are ne'er forgot ;
Her wedlock's marr'd when either's miss'd :
Or when she's kiss'd, but beaten not,
Or duly beaten, but not kiss'd.
Ah, Child, the sweet
Content, when we're both kiss'd and beat !
—But whence these wounds ? What Demon
thee enjoins

To scourge thy shoulders white
And tender loins !'

' 'Tis nothing, Mother. Happiness at play,

And speech of tenderness no speech can say ! ’

‘ How learn’d thou art !

Twelve honeymoons profane had taught thy
docile heart

Less than thine Eros, in a summer night ! ’

‘ Nay, do not jeer, but help my puzzled
plight :

Because he loves so marvellously me,

And I with all he loves in love must be,

How to except myself I do not see.

Yea, now that other vanities are vain,

I’m vain, since him it likes, of being withal

Weak, foolish, small ! ’

‘ How can a Maid forget her ornaments !

The Powers, that hopeless doom the proud to
die,

Unask’d smile pardon upon vanity,

Nay, praise it, when themselves are praised
thereby.’

‘ Ill-match’d I am for a God’s blandish-
ments !

So great, so wise—’

‘ Gods, in the abstract, are, no doubt, most
wise ;

But, in the concrete, Girl, they’re mysteries !

He's not with thee,
At all less wise nor more
Than human Lover is with her he deigns to
adore.

He finds a fair capacity,
And fills it with himself, and glad would die
For that sole She.'

' Know'st thou some potion me awake to keep,
Lest, to the grief of that ne'er-slumbering Bliss,
Disgraced I sleep,
Wearied in soul by his bewildering kiss ? '

' The Immortals, Psyche, moulded men from
sods
That Maids from them might learn the ways
of Gods.

Think, would a wakeful Youth his hard fate
weep,

Lock'd to the tired breast of a Bride asleep ? '

' Ah, me, I do not dream,
Yet all this does some heathen fable seem ! '

' O'ermuch thou mind'st the throne he
leaves above !

Between unequals sweet is equal love.'

' Nay, Mother, in his breast, when darkness
blinds,

I cannot for my life but talk and laugh
With the large impudence of little minds !'

' Respectful to the Gods and meek,
According to one's lights, I grant
'Twere well to be ;
But, on my word,
Child, any one, to hear you speak,
Would take you for a Protestant,
(Such fish I do foresee
When the charm'd fume comes strong on me,)
Or powder'd lackey, by some great man's
board,

A deal more solemn than his Lord !
Know'st thou not, Girl, thine Eros loves to
laugh ?

And shall a God do anything by half?
He foreknew and predestinated all
The Great must pay for kissing things so small,
And ever loves his little Maid the more
The more she makes him laugh.'

' O, Mother, are you sure ? '

' Gaze steady where yon starless deep the
gaze revolts,
And say,
Seest thou a Titan forging thunderbolts,

Or three fair butterflies at lovesome play ?
And this I'll add, for succour of thy soul :
Lines parallel meet sooner than some think ;
The least part oft is greater than the whole ;
And, when you're thirsty, that's the time to
drink.'

' Thy sacred words I ponder and revere,
And thank thee heartily that some are clear.'

' Clear speech to men is mostly speech in vain,
Their scope is by themselves so justly scann'd,
They still despise the things they understand ;
But, to a pretty Maid like thee, I don't mind
speaking plain.'

' Then one boon more to her whom strange
Fate mocks
With a wife's duty but no wife's sweet right :
Could I at will but summon my Delight—'

' Thou of thy Jewel art the dainty box ;
Thine is the charm which, any time, unlocks ;
And this, it seems, thou hitt'st upon last night.
Now go, Child ! For thy sake
I've talk'd till this stiff tripod makes my old
limbs ache.'

From The Unknown Eros

Psyche's Discontent

‘ **E**nough, enough, ambrosial plumed Boy !
My bosom is aweary of thy breath.

Thou kissest joy

To death.

Have pity of my clay-conceived birth

And maiden's simple mood,

Which longs for ether and infinitude,

As thou, being God, crav'st littleness and earth !

Thou art immortal, thou canst ever toy,

Nor savour less

The sweets of thine eternal childishness,

And hold thy godhead bright in far employ.

Me, to quite other custom life-inured,

Ah, loose from thy caress.

'Tis not to be endured !

Undo thine arms and let me see the sky,

By this infatuating flame obscured.

O, I should feel thee nearer to my heart

If thou and I

Shone each to each responsdently apart,

Like stars which one the other trembling spy,
Distinct and lucid in extremes of air.

O, hear me pray——'

'Be prudent in thy prayer !

A God is bond to her who is wholly his,
And, should she ask amiss,
He may not her beseeched harm deny.'

'Not yet, not yet !

'Tis still high day, and half my toil's to do.
How can I toil, if thus thou dost renew
Toil's guerdon, which the daytime should
forget ?

The long, long night, when none can work for
fear,

Sweet fear incessantly consummated,
My most divinely Dear,
My Joy, my Dread,
Will soon be here !

Not, Eros, yet !

I ask, for Day, the use which is the Wife's :
To bear, apart from thy delight and thee,
The fardel coarse of customary life's
Exceeding injucundity.

Leave me awhile, that I may shew thee clear
How Goddess-like thy love has lifted me ;

How, seeming lone upon the gaunt, lone shore,
I'll trust thee near,
When thou'rt, to knowledge of my heart, no
more

Than a dream's heed
Of lost joy track'd in scent of the sea-weed !
Leave me to pluck the incomparable flower
Of frailty lion-like fighting in thy name and
power ;

To make thee laugh, in thy safe heaven, to see
With what grip fell

I'll cling to hope when life draws hard to hell,
Yea, cleave to thee when me thou seem'st to
slay,

Haply, at close of some most cruel day,
To find myself in thy reveal'd arms clasp'd,
Just when I say,

My feet have slipp'd at last !

But, lo, while thus I store toil's slow increase,
To be my dower, in patience and in peace,
Thou com'st, like bolt from blue, invisibly,
With premonition none nor any sign,
And, at a gasp, no choice nor fault of mine,
Possess'd I am with thee

Ev'n as a sponge is by a surge of the sea !'

' Thus irresistibly by Love embraced
Is she who boasts her more than mortal chaste ! '

' Find'st thou me worthy, then, by day and
night,

But of this fond indignity, delight ? ' .

' Little, bold Femininity,
That darest blame Heaven, what would'st thou
have or be ? '

' Shall I, the gnat which dances in thy ray,
Dare to be reverent ? Therefore dare I say,
I cannot guess the good that I desire ;
But this I know, I spurn the gifts which Hell
Can mock till which is which 'tis hard to tell.
I love thee, God ; yea, and 'twas such assault
As this which made me thine ; if that be fault ;
But I, thy Mistress, merit should thine ire
If aught so little, transitory and low
As this which made me thine
Should hold me so.'

' Little to thee, my Psyche, is this, but much
to me ! '

' Ah, if, my God, that be ! '

' Yea, Palate fine,
That claim'st for thy proud cup the pearl of
price,

And scorn'st the wine,
Accept the sweet, and say 'tis sacrifice !
Sleep, Centre to the tempest of my love,
And dream thereof,
And keep the smile which sleeps within thy face
Like sunny eve in some forgotten place !'

From The Unknown Eros

Pain

O, Pain, Love's mystery,
Close next of kin
To joy and heart's delight,
Low Pleasure's opposite,
Choice food of sanctity
And medicine of sin,
Angel, whom even they that will pursue
Pleasure with hell's whole gust
Find that they must
Perversely woo,
My lips, thy live coal touching, speak thee true.
Thou sear'st my flesh, O Pain,
But brand'st for arduous peace my languid
brain,
And bright'nest my dull view,
Till I, for blessing, blessing give again,
And my roused spirit is
Another fire of bliss,
Wherein I learn
Feelingly how the pangful, purging fire

Shall furiously burn
With joy, not only of assured desire,
But also present joy
Of seeing the life's corruption, stain by stain,
Vanish in the clear heat of Love irate,
And, fume by fume, the sick alloy
Of luxury, sloth and hate
Evaporate ;
Leaving the man, so dark erewhile,
The mirror merely of God's smile.
Herein, O Pain, abides the praise
For which my song I raise ;
But even the bastard good of intermittent ease
How greatly doth it please !
With what repose
The being from its bright exertion glows,
When from thy strenuous storm the senses sweep
Into a little harbour deep
Of rest ;
When thou, O Pain,
Having devour'd the nerves that thee sustain,
Sleep'st, till thy tender food be somewhat grown
again ;
And how the lull
With tear-blind love is full !

What mockery of a man am I express'd
That I should wait for thee
To woo !
Nor even dare to love, till thou lov'st me.
How shameful, too,
Is this :
That, when thou lov'st, I am at first afraid
Of thy fierce kiss,
Like a young maid ;
And only trust thy charms
And get my courage in thy throbbing arms.
And, when thou partest, what a fickle mind
Thou leav'st behind,
That, being a little absent from mine eye,
It straight forgets thee what thou art,
And oftentimes my adulterate heart
Dallies with Pleasure, thy pale enemy.
O, for the learned spirit without attaint
That does not faint,
But knows both how to have thee and to lack
And ventures many a spell,
Unlawful but for them that love so well,
To call thee back.

From The Unknown Eros

To the Body

Creation's and Creator's crowning good ;
Wall of infinitude ;
Foundation of the sky,
In Heaven forecast
And long'd for from eternity,
Though laid the last ;
Reverberating dome,
Of music cunningly built home
Against the void and indolent disgrace
Of unresponsive space ;
Little, sequester'd pleasure-house
For God and for His Spouse ;
Elaborately, yea, past conceiving, fair,
Since, from the graced decorum of the hair,
Ev'n to the tingling, sweet
Soles of the simple, earth-confiding feet,
And from the inmost heart
Outwards unto the thin
Silk curtains of the skin,
Every least part

Astonish'd hears
And sweet replies to some like region of the
spheres ;
Form'd for a dignity prophets but darkly name,
Lest shameless men cry ' Shame !'
So rich with wealth conceal'd
That Heaven and Hell fight chiefly for this
field ;
Clinging to everything that pleases thee
With indefectible fidelity ;
Alas, so true
To all thy friendships that no grace
Thee from thy sin can wholly disembrace ;
Which thus 'bides with thee as the Jebusite,
That, maugre all God's promises could do,
The chosen People never conquer'd quite ;
Who therefore lived with them,
And that by formal truce and as of right,
In metropolitan Jerusalem.
For which false fealty
Thou needs must, for a season, lie
In the grave's arms, foul and unshriven,
Albeit, in Heaven,
Thy crimson-throbbing Glow
Into its old abode aye pants to go,

And does with envy see
Enoch, Elijah, and the Lady, she
Who left the roses in her body's lieu.
O, if the pleasures I have known in thee
But my poor faith's poor first-fruits be,
What quintessential, keen, ethereal bliss
Then shall be his
Who has thy birth-time's consecrating dew
For death's sweet chrism retain'd,
Quick, tender, virginal, and unprofaned !

From The Unknown Eros

Deliciæ Sapientiæ de Amore

Love, light for me
Thy ruddiest blazing torch,
That I, albeit a beggar by the Porch
Of the glad Palace of Virginity,
May gaze within, and sing the pomp I see ;
For, crown'd with roses all,
'Tis there, O Love, they keep thy festival !
But first warn off the beatific spot
Those wretched who have not
Even afar beheld the shining wall,
And those who, once beholding, have forgot,
And those, most vile, who dress
The charnel spectre drear
Of utterly dishallow'd nothingness
In that refulgent fame,
And cry, Lo, here !
And name
The Lady whose smiles inflame
The sphere.
Bring, Love, anear,

And bid be not afraid
Young Lover true, and love-foreboding Maid,
And wedded Spouse, if virginal of thought ;
For I will sing of nought
Less sweet to hear
Than seems
A music in their half-remember'd dreams.

The magnet calls the steel :
Answers the iron to the magnet's breath ;
What do they feel
But death !
The clouds of summer kiss in flame and rain,
And are not found again ;
But the heavens themselves eternal are with fire
Of unapproach'd desire,
By the aching heart of Love, which cannot rest,
In blissfullest pathos so indeed possess'd.
O, spousals high ;
O, doctrine blest,
Unutterable in even the happiest sigh ;
This know ye all
Who can recall
With what a welling of indignant tears
Love's simpleness first hears
The meaning of his mortal covenant,

And from what pride comes down
To wear the crown .
Of which 'twas very heaven to feel the want.
How envies he the ways
Of yonder hopeless star,
And so would laugh and yearn
With trembling lids eterne,
Ineffably content from infinitely far
Only to gaze
On his bright Mistress's responding rays,
That never know eclipse ;
And, once in his long year,
With præternuptial ecstasy and fear,
By the delicious law of that ellipse
Wherein all citizens of ether move,
With hastening pace to come
Nearer, though never near,
His Love .
And always inaccessible sweet Home ;
There on his path doubly to burn.
Kiss'd by her doubled light
That whispers of its source,
The ardent secret ever clothed with Night,
Then go forth in new force
Towards a new return,

Rejoicing as a Bridegroom on his course !
 This know ye all ;
 Therefore gaze bold,
 That so in you be joyful hope increas'd,
 Thorough the Palace portals, and behold
 The dainty and unsating Marriage-Feast.
 O, hear
 Them singing clear
 ' Cor meum et caro mea ' round the ' I am,'
 The Husband of the Heavens, and the Lamb
 Whom they for ever follow there that kept,
 Or losing, never slept
 Till they reconquer'd had in mortal fight
 The standard white.
 O, hear
 From the harps they bore from Earth, five-
 strung, what music springs,
 While the glad Spirits chide
 The wondering strings !
 And how the shining sacrificial Choirs,
 Offering for aye their dearest hearts' desires,
 Which to their hearts come back beatified,
 Hymn, the bright aisles along,
 The nuptial song,
 Song ever new to us and them, that saith,

'Hail Virgin in Virginity a Spouse !'

Heard first below

Within the little house

At Nazareth ;

Heard yet in many a cell where brides of Christ

Lie hid, emparadised,

And where, although

By the hour 'tis night,

There's light,

The Day still lingering in the lap of snow.

Gaze and be not afraid

Ye wedded few that honour, in sweet thought

And glittering will,

So freshly from the garden gather still

The lily sacrificed ;

For ye, though self-suspected here for nought,

Are highly styled

With the thousands twelve times twelve of
undefiled.

Gaze and be not afraid

Young Lover true and love-foreboding Maid.

The full noon of deific vision bright

Abashes nor abates

No spark minute of Nature's keen delight. ,

'Tis there your Hymen waits !

There where in courts afar, all unconfused,
 they crowd,

As fumes the starlight soft

In gulfs of cloud,

And each to the other, well-content,

Sighs oft,

‘ ’Twas this we meant ! ’

Gaze without blame

Ye in whom living Love yet blushes for dead
 shame.

There of pure Virgins none

Is fairer seen,

Save One,

Than Mary Magdalene.

Gaze without doubt or fear

Ye to whom generous Love, by any name, is
 dear.

Love makes the life to be

A fount perpetual of virginity ;

For, lo, the Elect

Of generous Love, how named soe’er, affect

Nothing but God,

Or mediate or direct,

Nothing but God,

The Husband of the Heavens :

And who Him love, in potence great or small,
Are, one and all,
Heirs of the Palace glad,
And inly clad
With the bridal robes of ardour virginal.

From The Unknown Eros

Arbor Vitæ

With honeysuckle, over-sweet, festoon'd ;
With bitter ivy bound ;
Terraced with funguses unsound ;
Deform'd with many a boss
And closed scar, o'ercushion'd deep with moss ;
Bunch'd all about with pagan mistletoe ;
And thick with nests of the hoarse bird
That talks, but understands not his own word ;
Stands, and so stood a thousand years ago,
A single tree.
Thunder has done its worst among its twigs,
Where the great crest yet blackens, never
pruned,
But in its heart, alway
Ready to push new verdurous boughs, whene'er
The rotting saplings near it fall and leave it air,
Is all antiquity and no decay.
Rich, though rejected by the forest-pigs,
Its fruit, beneath whose rough, concealing rind
They that will break it find

Heart-succouring savour of each several meat,
And kernell'd drink of brain-renewing power,
With bitter condiment and sour,
And sweet economy of sweet,
And odours that remind
Of haunts of childhood and a different day.
Beside this tree,
Praising no Gods nor blaming, sans a wish,
Sits, Tartar-like, the Time's civility,
And eats its dead-dog off a golden dish.

From The Unknown Eros

The Two Deserts

Not greatly moved with awe am I
To learn that we may spy
Five thousand firmaments beyond our own.
The best that's known
Of the heavenly bodies does them credit small.
View'd close, the Moon's fair ball
Is of ill objects worst,
A corpse in Night's highway, naked, fire-
scarr'd, accurst ;
And now they tell
That the Sun is plainly seen to boil and burst
Too horribly for hell.
So, judging from these two,
As we must do,
The Universe, outside our living Earth,
Was all conceiv'd in the Creator's mirth,
Forecasting at the time Man's spirit deep,
To make dirt cheap.
Put by the Telescope !
Better without it man may see,

Stretch'd awful in the hush'd midnight,
The ghost of his eternity.
Give me the nobler glass that swells to the eye
The things which near us lie,
Till Science rapturously hails,
In the minutest water-drop,
A torment of innumerable tails.
These at the least do live.
But rather give
A mind not much to pry
Beyond our royal-fair estate
Betwixt these deserts blank of small and great.
Wonder and beauty our own courtiers are,
Pressing to catch our gaze,
And out of obvious ways
Ne'er wandering far.

From The Unknown Eros

Wind and Wave

The wedded light and heat,
Winnowing the witless space,
Without a let,
What are they till they beat
Against the sleepy sod, and there beget
Perchance the violet !
Is the One found,
Amongst a wilderness of as happy grace,
To make Heaven's bound ;
So that in Her
All which it hath of sensitively good
Is sought and understood
After the narrow mode the mighty Heavens
prefer ?
She, as a little breeze
Following still Night,
Ripples the spirit's cold, deep seas
Into delight ;
But, in a while,
The immeasurable smile

Is broke by fresher airs to flashes blent
With darkling discontent ;
And all the subtle zephyr hurries gay,
And all the heaving ocean heaves one way,
T'ward the void sky-line and an unguess'd
 weal ;
Until the vanward billows feel
The agitating shallows, and divine the goal,
And to foam roll,
And spread and stray
And traverse wildly, like delighted hands,
The fair and fleckless sands ;
And so the whole
Unfathomable and immense
Triumphing tide comes at the last to reach
And burst in wind-kiss'd splendours on the
 deaf'ning beach,
Where forms of children in first innocence
Laugh and fling pebbles on the rainbow'd crest
Of its untired unrest.

From The Unknown Eros

Winter

I, singularly moved
To love the lovely that are not beloved,
Of all the Seasons, most
Love Winter, and to trace
The sense of the Trophonian pallor on her face.
It is not death, but plenitude of peace ;
And the dim cloud that does the world enfold
Hath less the characters of dark and cold
Than warmth and light asleep,
And correspondent breathing seems to keep
With the infant harvest, breathing soft below
Its eider coverlet of snow.
Nor is in field or garden anything
But, duly look'd into, contains serene
The substance of things hoped for, in the Spring,
And evidence of Summer not yet seen.
On every chance-mild day
That visits the moist shaw,
The honeysuckle, 'sdaining to be crost
In urgency of sweet life by sleet or frost,

'Voids the time's law
With still increase
Of leaflet new, and little, wandering spray ;
Often, in sheltering brakes,
As one from rest disturb'd in the first hour,
Primrose or violet bewilder'd wakes,
And deems 'tis time to flower ;
Though not a whisper of her voice he hear,
The buried bulb does know
The signals of the year,
And hails far Summer with his lifted spear.
The gorse-field dark, by sudden, gold caprice,
Turns, here and there, into a Jason's fleece ;
Lilies, that soon in Autumn slipp'd their gowns
 of green,
And vanish'd into earth,
And came again, ere Autumn died, to birth,
Stand full-array'd, amidst the wavering shower,
And perfect for the Summer, less the flower ;
In nook of pale or crevice of crude bark,
Thou canst not miss,
If close thou spy, to mark
The ghostly chrysalis,
That, if thou touch it, stirs in its dream dark ;
And the flush'd Robin, in the evenings hoar,

Does of Love's Day, as if he saw it, sing ;
But sweeter yet than dream or song of Summer
or Spring

Are Winter's sometime smiles, that seem to well
From infancy ineffable ;

Her wandering, languorous gaze,

So unfamiliar, so without amaze,

On the elemental, chill adversity,

The uncomprehended rudeness ; and her sigh

And solemn, gathering tear,

And look of exile from some great repose, the
sphere

Of ether, moved by ether only, or

By something still more tranquil.

From The Unknown Eros

Magna est Veritas

Here, in this little Bay,
Full of tumultuous life and great repose,
Where, twice a day,
The purposeless, glad ocean comes and goes,
Under high cliffs, and far from the huge town,
I sit me down.
For want of me the world's course will not fail :
When all its work is done, the lie shall rot ;
The truth is great, and shall prevail,
When none cares whether it prevail or not.

From The Unknown Eros

To Alicia
Requiring some Verses in Her Praise

Seen by your solitary style,
The World's next fairest is
The mild Creator's casual smile,
Match'd with His solemn kiss.
The scale of music wants your note ;
Of loveliest things, each one
To you hath some aspect remote,
But you are like to none.
I turn from Earth, for hues to paint
Your charm : Heaven fails me too :
Of seraph, angel, or of saint
What know I, but of you ?
Nay, should the Sphere some gay hint drop
Which named you without wrong,
The wondrous Word the breath would stop
That should go forth in song.

Privately Printed

Alicia's Vanities

A rustle on the staircase
Gives the heart gay warning ;
With a laugh like many primroses
She flies the children's chase ;
And she comes in to breakfast,
As bright as a May morning,
All the day's glad duties
Shining in her face.
' You ARE an early caller ! '
' I have brought you my review.'
In haste she takes her coffee ;
Then she rises, and we two
Draw our chairs towards the fender,
And I read her praise, while, sweet,
She smiles in complation
Of her fame and her small feet.

Privately Printed

FROM
'THE ANGEL IN THE
HOUSE'

I. *From 'The Cathedral Close'*

Once more I came to Sarum Close,
With joy half memory, half desire,
And breathed the sunny wind that rose
And blew the shadows o'er the Spire,
And toss'd the lilac's scented plumes,
And sway'd the chestnut's thousand cones,
And fill'd my nostrils with perfumes,
And shaped the clouds in waifs and zones,
And wafted down the serious strain
Of Sarum bells, when, true to time,
I reach'd the Dean's, with heart and brain
That trembled to the trembling chime.

'Twas half my home, six years ago.

The six years had not alter'd it :
 Red-brick and ashlar, long and low,
 With dormers and with oriels lit.

Geranium, lychnis, rose 'array'd

The windows, all wide open thrown ;
 And some one in the Study play'd

The Wedding-March of Mendelssohn.
 And there it was I last took leave :

'Twas Christmas : I remember'd now
 The cruel girls, who feign'd to grieve,
 Took down the evergreens ; and how
 The holly into blazes woke

The fire, lighting the large, low room
 A dim, rich lustre of old oak
 And crimson velvet's glowing gloom.

No change had touch'd Dean Churchill
 kind,

By widowhood more than winters bent,
 And settled in a cheerful mind,

As still forecasting heaven's content.
 Well might his thoughts be fix'd on high,
 Now she was there ! Within her face

Humility and dignity

Were met in a most sweet embrace.

She seem'd expressly sent below

To teach our erring minds to see

The rhythmic change of time's swift flow

As part of still eternity.

Her life, all honour, observed, with awe

Which cross experience could not mar,

The fiction of the Christian law

That all men honourable are ;

And so her smile at once conferr'd

High flattery and benign reproof ;

And I, a rude boy, strangely stirr'd,

Grew courtly in my own behoof.

The years, so far from doing her wrong,

Anointed her with gracious balm,

And made her brows more and more young

With wreaths of amaranth and palm.

From Bk. I, Canto I

II. *The Paragon*

When I behold the skies aloft
Passing the pageantry of dreams,
The cloud whose bosom, cygnet soft,
A couch for nuptial Juno seems,
The ocean broad, the mountains bright,
The shadowy vales with feeding herds,
I from my lyre the music smite,
Nor want for justly matching words.
All forces of the sea and air,
All interests of hill and plain,
I so can sing, in seasons fair,
That who hath felt may feel again.
Elated oft by such free songs,
I think with utterance free to raise
That hymn for which the whole world longs,
A worthy hymn in woman's praise ;
A hymn bright-noted like a bird's,
Arousing these song-sleepy times,
With rhapsodies of perfect words,
Ruled by returning kiss of rhymes.

But when I look on her and hope
To tell with joy what I admire,
My thoughts lie cramp'd in narrow scope,
Or in the feeble birth expire ;
No mystery of well-woven speech,
No simplest phrase of tenderest fall,
No liken'd excellence can reach
Her, the most excellent of all,
The best half of creation's best,
Its heart to feel, its eye to see,
The crown and complex of the rest,
Its aim and its epitome.
Nay, might I utter my conceit,
'Twere after all a vulgar song,
For she's so simply, subtly sweet,
My deepest rapture does her wrong.
Yet is it now my chosen task
To sing her worth as Maid and Wife ;
Nor happier post than this I ask,
To live her laureate all my life.
On wings of love uplifted free,
And by her gentleness made great,
I'll teach how noble man should be
To match with such a lovely mate ;
And then in her may move the more

The woman's wish to be desired,
(By praise increased), till both shall soar,
With blissful emulations fired.
And, as geranium, pink, or rose
Is, thrice itself through power of art,
So may my happy skill disclose
New fairness even in her fair heart ;
Until that churl shall nowhere be
Who bends not, awed, before the throne
Of her affecting majesty,
So meek, so far unlike our own ;
Until (for who may hope too much
From her who wields the powers of love ?)
Our gifted lives at last shall touch
That happy goal to which they move ;
Until we find, as darkness rolls
Away, and evil mists dissolve,
The nuptial contrasts are the poles
On which the heavenly spheres revolve.

From The Angel in the House, Bk. I, Canto II

III. *Love at Large*

When'er I come where ladies are,
How sad soever I was before,
Though like a ship frost-bound and far
Withheld in ice from the ocean's roar,
Third-winter'd in that dreadful dock,
With stiffen'd cordage, sails decay'd,
And crew that care for calm and shock
Alike, too dull to be dismay'd,
Yet, if I come where ladies are,
How sad soever I was before,
Then is my sadness banish'd far,
And I am like that ship no more ;
Or like that ship if the ice-field splits,
Burst by the sudden polar Spring,
And all thank God with their warming wits,
And kiss each other and dance and sing,
And hoist fresh sails, that make the breeze
Blow them along the liquid sea,
Out of the North, where life did freeze,
Into the haven where they would be.

From The Angel in the House, Bk. II, Canto II

IV. *The Lover*

He meets, by heavenly chance express,
The destined maid ; some hidden hand
Unveils to him that loveliness

Which others cannot understand.
His merits in her presence grow,
To match the promise in her eyes,
And round her happy footsteps blow
The authentic air of Paradise.
For joy of her he cannot sleep ;

Her beauty haunts him all the night ;
It melts his heart, it makes him weep
For wonder, worship, and delight.

O, paradox of love, he longs,
Most humble when he most aspires,
To suffer scorn and cruel wrongs

From her he honours and desires.
Her graces make him rich, and ask
No guerdon ; this imperial style
Affronts him ; he disdains to bask,
The pensioner of her priceless smile.

He prays for some hard thing to do,
Some work of fame and labour immense,
To stretch the languid bulk and thew
Of love's fresh-born magnipotence.
No smallest boon were bought too dear,
Though barter'd for his love-sick life ;
Yet trusts he, with undaunted cheer,
To vanquish heaven, and call her Wife.
He notes how queens of sweetness still
Neglect their crowns, and stoop to mate ;
How, self-consign'd with lavish will,
They ask but love proportionate ;
How swift pursuit by small degrees,
Love's tactic, works like miracle ;
How valour, clothed in courtesies,
Brings down the haughtiest citadel ;
And therefore, though he merits not
To kiss the braid upon her skirt,
His hope, discouraged ne'er a jot,
Out-soars all possible desert.

From The Angel in the House, Bk. I, Canto III

v. *Love a Virtue*

Strong passions mean weak will, and he
Who truly knows the strength and bliss
Which are in love, will own with me

No passion but a virtue 'tis.

Few hear my word ; it soars above

The subtlest senses of the swarm
Of wretched things which know not love,

Their Psyche still a wingless worm.

Ice-cold seems heaven's noble glow

To spirits whose vital heat is hell ;

And to corrupt hearts even so

The songs I sing, the tale I tell.

These cannot see the robes of white

In which I sing of love. Alack,

But darkness shows in heavenly light,

Through whiteness, in the dark, is black !

From The Angel in the House, Bk. I, Canto III

VI. *Unthrift*

Ah, wasteful woman, she who may
On her sweet self set her own price,
Knowing man she cannot choose but pay,
How has she cheapen'd paradise ;
How given nought her priceless gift,
How spoil'd the bread and spill'd the wine,
Which, spent with due, respective thrift,
Had made brutes men, and men divine.

From The Angel in the House, Bk. I, Canto III

VII. *The Tribute*

Boon Nature to the woman bows ;
She walks in earth's whole glory clad ;
And, chiefest far herself of shows,

 All others help her, and are glad :
No splendour 'neath the sky's proud dome
 But serves for her familiar wear ;

The far-fetch'd diamond finds its home
 Flashing and smouldering in her hair ;
For her the seas their pearls reveal ;

 Art and strange lands her pomp supply
With purple, chrome, and cochineal,

 Ochre and lapis lazuli ;
The worm its golden woof presents ;

 Whatever runs, flies, dives, or delves,
All doff for her their ornaments,

 Which suit her better than themselves ;
And all, by this their power to give,

 Proving her right to take, proclaim
Her beauty's clear prerogative

 To profit so by Eden's blame.

From The Angel in the House, Bk. I, Canto IV

VIII. *Love's Immortality*

How vilely 'twere to misdeserve
The poet's gift of perfect speech,
In song to try, with trembling nerve,
The limit of its utmost reach,
Only to sound the wretched praise
Of what to-morrow shall not be ;
So mocking with immortal bays
The cross-bones of mortality !
I do not thus. My faith is fast
That all the loveliness I sing
Is made to bear the mortal blast,
And blossom in a better Spring.
Doubts of eternity ne'er cross
The Lover's mind, divinely clear :
For ever is the gain or loss
Which maddens him with hope or fear
So trifles serve for his relief,
And trifles make him sick and pale ;
And yet his pleasure and his grief
Are both on a majestic scale.

The chance, indefinitely small,
Of issue infinitely great,
Eclipses finite interests all,
And has the dignity of fate.

From The Angel in the House, Bk. I, Canto VII

IX. *From 'The County Ball'*

But there danced she, who from the leaven
Of ill preserv'd my heart and wit
All unawares, for she was heaven,
Others at best but fit for it.
One of those lovely things she was
In whose least action there can be
Nothing so transient but it has
An air of immortality.
I mark'd her step, with peace elate,
Her brow more beautiful than morn,
Her sometime look of girlish state
Which sweetly waived its right to scorn ;
The giddy crowd, she grave the while,
Although, as 'twere beyond her will,
Around her mouth the baby smile,
That she was born with, linger'd still.
Her ball-dress seem'd a breathing mist,
From the fair form exhaled and shed,
Raised in the dance with arm and wrist
All warmth and light, unbraceleted.

Her motion, feeling 'twas beloved,
The pensive soul of tune express'd,
And, oh, what perfume, as she moved,
Came from the flowers in her breast !
How sweet a tongue the music had !
' Beautiful Girl,' it seem'd to say,
' Though all the world were vile and sad,
Dance on ; let innocence be gay.'
Ah, none but I discern'd her looks,
When in the throng she pass'd me by,
For love is like a ghost, and brooks
Only the chosen seer's eye ;
And who but she could e'er divine
The halo and the happy trance,
When her bright arm reposed on mine,
In all the pauses of the dance !

From The Angel in the House, Bk. II, Canto III

x. *Love's Perversity*

How strange a thing a lover seems
To animals that do not love !
Lo, where he walks and talks in dreams,
And flouts us with his Lady's glove ;
How foreign is the garb he wears ;
And how his great devotion mocks
Our poor propriety, and scares
The undevout with paradox !
His soul, through scorn of worldly care,
And great extremes of sweet and gall,
And musing much on all that's fair,
Grows witty and fantastical ;
He sobs his joy and sings his grief,
And evermore finds such delight
In simply picturing his relief,
That 'plaining seems to cure his plight ;
He makes his sorrow, when there's none ;
His fancy blows both cold and hot ;
Next to the wish that she'll be won,
His first hope is that she may not ;

He sues, yet deprecates consent ;

Would she be captured she must fly ;
She looks too happy and content,

For whose least pleasure he would die.
Oh, cruelty, she cannot care

For one to whom she's always kind !
He says he's nought, but, oh, despair,

If he's not Jove to her fond mind !
He's jealous if she pets a dove,

She must be his with all her soul ;
Yet 'tis a postulate in love

That part is greater than the whole ;
And all his apprehension's stress,

When he's with her, regards her hair,
Her hand, a ribbon of her dress,

As if his life were only there ;
Because she's constant, he will change,

And kindest glances coldly meet,
And, all the time he seems so strange,

His soul is fawning at her feet ;
Of smiles and simple heaven grown tired

He wickedly provokes her tears,
And when she weeps, as he desired,

Falls slain with ecstasies of fears ;
He blames her, though she has no fault,

Except the folly to be his ;
He worships her, the more to exalt
The profanation of a kiss ;
Health's his disease ; he's never well
But when his paleness shames her rose ;
His faith's a rock-built citadel,
Its sign a flag that each way blows ;
His o'erfed fancy frets and fumes ;
And Love, in him, is fierce, like Hate,
And ruffles his ambrosial plumes
Against the bars of time and fate.

From The Angel in the House, Bk. II, Canto VI

XI. *In Love*

If he's capricious she'll be so,
But, if his duties constant are,
She lets her loving favour glow
As steady as a tropic star ;
Appears there nought, for which to weep ;
She'll weep for nought, for his dear sake ;
She clasps her sister in her sleep ;
Her love in dreams is most awake.
Her soul, that once with pleasure shook,
Did any eyes her beauty own,
Now wonders how they dare to look
On what belongs to him alone ;
The indignity of taking gifts
Exhilarates her loving breast ;
A rapture of submission lifts
Her life into celestial rest ;
There's nothing left of what she was ;
Back to the babe the woman dies,
And all the wisdom that she has
Is to love him for being wise.

She's confident because she fears,
And, though discreet when he's away,
If none but her dear despot hears,
She prattles like a child at play.
Perchance, when all her praise is said,
He tells the news, a battle won,
On either side ten thousand dead.
'Alas !' she says ; but, if 'twere known,
She thinks, ' He's looking on my face !
I am his joy ; what'er I do,
He sees such time-contenting grace
In that, he'd have me always so !'
And, evermore, for either's sake,
To the sweet folly of the dove,
She joins the cunning of the snake,
To rivet and exalt his love ;
Her mode of candour is deceit ;
And what she thinks from what she'll
say,
(Although I'll never call her cheat),
Lies far as Scotland from Cathay.
Without his knowledge he has won ;
Against his nature kept devout ;
She'll never tell him how 'twas done,
And he will never find it out.

If, sudden, he suspects her wiles,
And hear her forging chain and trap,
And looks, she sits in simple smiles,
Her two hands lying in her lap.
Her secret (privilege of the Bard,
Whose fancy is of either sex)
Is mine ; but let the darkness guard
Myst'ries that light would more perplex !
From The Angel in the House, Bk. II, Canto VIII

XII. *The Foreign Land*

A woman is a foreign land,
Of which, though there he settle young,
A man will ne'er quite understand
The customs, politics, and tongue.
The foolish hie them post-haste through,
See fashions odd, and prospects fair,
Learn of the language, 'How d'ye do',
And go and brag they have been there.
The most for leave to trade apply,
For once, at Empire's seat, her heart,
Then get what knowledge ear and eye
Glean chance-wise in the life-long mart.
And certain others, few and fit,
Attach them to the Court, and see
The Country's best, its accent hit,
And partly sound its policy.

From The Angel in the House, Bk. II, Canto IX

XIII. *From 'The Revulsion'*

'Twas when the spousal time of May
Hangs all the hedge with bridal wreaths,
And air's so sweet the bosom gay
Gives thanks for every breath it breathes ;
When like to like is gladly moved,
And each thing joins in Spring's refrain,
' Let those love now who never loved ;
Let those who have loved love again ;'
That I, in whom the sweet time wrought,
Lay stretch'd within a lonely glade,
Abandon'd to delicious thought,
Beneath the softly twinkling shade.
The leaves, all stirring, mimick'd well
A neighbouring rush of rivers cold,
And, as the sun or shadow fell,
So these were green and those were gold ;
In dim recesses hyacinths droop'd,
And breadths of primrose lit the air,

Which, wandering through the woodland,
stoop'd

And gather'd perfumes here and there ;
Upon the spray the squirrel swung,

And careless songsters, six or seven,
Sang lofty songs the leaves among,

Fit for their only listener, Heaven.

I sigh'd, ' Immeasurable bliss

Gains nothing by becoming more !

Millions have meaning ; after this

Cyphers forget the integer.'

From The Angel in the House, Bk. II, Canto VII

XIV. *The Married Lover*

Why, having won her, do I woo?
Because her spirit's vestal grace
Provokes me always to pursue,
But, spirit-like, eludes embrace ;
Because her womanhood is such
That, as on court-days subjects kiss
The Queen's hand, yet so near a touch
Affirms no mean familiarity,
Nay, rather marks more fair the height
Which can with safety so neglect
To dread, as lower ladies might,
That grace could meet with disrespect,
Thus she with happy favour feeds
Allegiance from a love so high
That thence no false conceit proceeds
Of difference bridged, or state put by ;
Because, although in act and word
As lowly as a wife can be,
Her manners, when they call me lord,
Remind me 'tis by courtesy ;

Not with her least consent of will,
Which would my proud affection hurt,
But by the noble style that still
Imputes an unattain'd desert ;
Because her gay and lofty brows,
When all is won which hope can ask,
Reflect a light of hopeless snows
That bright in virgin ether bask ;
Because, though free of the outer court
I am, this Temple keeps its shrine
Sacred to Heaven ; because, in short,
She's not and never can be mine.

From The Angel in the House, Bk. II, Canto XII

XV. *The Amaranth*

Feasts satiate ; stars distress with height ;
Friendship means well, but misses reach,
And wearies in its best delight
 Vex'd with the vanities of speech ;
Too long regarded, roses even
 Afflict the mind with fond unrest ;
And to converse direct with Heaven
 Is oft a labour in the breast ;
Whate'er the up-looking soul admires,
 Whate'er the senses' banquet be,
Fatigues at last with vain desires,
 Or sickens by satiety ;
But truly my delight was more
 In her to whom I'm bound for aye
Yesterday than the day before,
 And more to-day than yesterday.

From The Angel in the House, Bk. II, Canto XII

‘ Sing Us one of the Songs of Sion ’

How sing the Lord’s Song in so strange a
Land ?

A torrid waste of water-mocking sand ;
Oases of wild grapes ;
A dull, malodorous fog
O’er a once Sacred River’s wandering strand,
Its ancient tillage all gone back to bog ;
A busy synod of blest cats and apes
Exposing the poor trick of earth and star
With worshipp’d snouts oracular ;
Prophets to whose blind stare
The heavens the glory of God do not declare,
Skill’d in such question nice
As why one conjures toads who fails with
lice,
And hatching snakes from sticks in such a
swarm
As quite to surfeit Aaron’s bigger worm ;
A nation which has got
A lie in her right hand,

And knows it not ;

With Pharaohs to her mind, each drifting as
a log

Which way the foul stream flows,
More harden'd the more plagued with fly and
frog !

How should sad Exile sing in such a Land ?
How should ye understand ?

What could he win but jeers,
Or howls, such as sweet music draws from
dog,

Who told of marriage-feasting to the man
That nothing knows of food but bread of bran ?
Besides, if aught such ears

Might e'er unclog,
There lives but one, with tones for Sion meet.
Behoveful, zealous, beautiful, elect,
Mild, firm, judicious, loving, bold, discreet,
Without superfluosness, without defect,
Few are his words, and find but scant respect,
Nay, scorn from some, for God's good cause
agog.

Silence in such a Land is oftenest such men's
speech.

O, that I might his holy secret reach ;

‘SING US ONE OF THE SONGS OF SION’ 125

O, might I catch his mantle when he goes ;
O, that I were so gentle and so sweet,
So I might deal fair Sion’s foolish foes
Such blows !

From The Unknown Eros

1867¹

In the year of the great crime,
When the false English Nobles and their
Jew,
By God demented, slew
The Trust they stood twice pledged to keep
from wrong,
One said, Take up thy Song,
That breathes the mild and almost mythic time
Of England's prime !
But I, Ah, me,
The freedom of the few
That, in our free Land, were indeed the free,
Can song renew ?
Ill singing 'tis with blotting prison-bars,
How high soe'er, betwixt us and the stars ;
Ill singing 'tis when there are none to hear ;
And days are near

¹ In this year the middle and upper classes were disfranchised by Mr. Disraeli's Government, and the final destruction of the liberties of England by the Act of 1884 rendered inevitable.

When England shall forget
The fading glow which, for a little while,
Illumes her yet,
The lovely smile
That grows so faint and wan,
Her people shouting in her dying ear,
Are not two daws worth two of any swan !

Ye outlaw'd Best, who yet are bright
With the sunken light,
Whose common style
Is Virtue at her gracious ease,
The flower of olden sanctities,
Ye haply trust, by love's benignant guile,
To lure the dark and selfish brood
To their own hated good ;
Ye haply dream
Your lives shall still their charming sway sustain,
Unstified by the fever'd steam
That rises from the plain.
Know, 'twas the force of function high,
In corporate exercise, and public awe
Of Nature's, Heaven's, and England's Law
That Best, though mix'd with Bad, should
reign,
Which kept you in your sky !

But, when the sordid Trader caught
The loose-held sceptre from your hands distraught,

And soon, to the Mechanic vain,
Sold the proud toy for nought,
Your charm was broke, your task was sped,
Your beauty, with your honour, dead,
And though you still are dreaming sweet
Of being even now not less
Than Gods and Goddesses, ye shall not long so
cheat

Your hearts of their due heaviness.
Go, get you for your evil watching shriven !
Leave to your lawful Master's itching hands
Your unking'd lands,
But keep, at least, the dignity
Of deigning not, for his smooth use, to be,
Voteless, the voted delegates
Of his strange interests, loves and hates.
In sackcloth, or in private strife
With private ill, ye may please Heaven,
And soothe the coming pangs of sinking life ;
And prayer perchance may win
A term to God's indignant mood
And the orgies of the multitude,

Which now begin ;
But do not hope to wave the silken rag
Of your unsanction'd flag,
And so to guide
The great ship, helmless on the swelling tide
Of that presumptuous Sea,
Unlit by sun or moon, yet inly bright
With lights innumerable that give no light,
Flames of corrupted will and scorn of right,
Rejoicing to be free.

And, now, because the dark comes on apace
When none can work for fear,
And Liberty in every Land lies slain,
And the two Tyrannies unchallenged reign,
And heavy prophecies, suspended long
At supplication of the righteous few,
And so discredited, to fulfilment throng,
Restrain'd no more by faithful prayer or tear,
And the dread baptism of blood seems near
That brings to the humbled Earth the Time of
Breathless be song, [Grace,
And let Christ's own look through
The darkness, suddenly increased,
To the gray secret lingering in the East.

From The Unknown Eros

1880-85

Stand by,
Ye Wise, by whom Heav'n rules !
Your kingly hands suit not the hangman's tools.
When God has doom'd a glorious Past to die,
Are there no knaves and fools ?
For ages yet to come your kind shall count for
nought.

Smoke of the strife of other Powers
Than ours,
And tongues inscrutable with fury fraught
'Wilder the sky,
Till the far good which none can guess be
wrought.

Stand by !
Since tears are vain, here let us rest and laugh,
But not too loudly ; for the brave time's come,
When Best may not blaspheme the Bigger Half,
And freedom for our sort means freedom to be
dumb.

Lo, how the dross and draff

Jeer up at us, and shout,
'The Day is ours, the Night is theirs !'
And urge their rout
Where the wild dawn of rising Tartarus flares.
Yon strives their Leader, lusting to be seen.
His leprosy's so perfect that men call him clean !
Listen the long, sincere, and liberal bray
Of the earnest Puller at another's hay
'Gainst aught that dares to tug the other way,
Quite void of fears
With all that noise of ruin round his ears !
Yonder the people cast their caps o'erhead,
And swear the threaten'd doom is ne'er to dread
That's come, though not yet past.
All front the horror and are none aghast ;
Brag of their full-blown rights and liberties,
Nor once surmise
When each man gets his due the Nation dies ;
Nay, still shout ' Progress ! ' as if seven plagues
Should take the laggard who would stretch his
legs.
Forward ! glad rush of Gergesian swine ;
You've gain'd the hill-top, but there's yet the
brine.
Forward ! to meet the welcome of the waves

That mount to 'whelm the freedom which
enslaves.

Forward ! bad corpses turn into good dung,
To feed strange futures beautiful and young.
Forward ! God speed ye down the damn'd
decline,

And grant ye the Fool's true good, in abject
ruin's gulf

As the Wise see him so to see himself !

Ah, Land once mine,

That seem'd to me too sweetly wise,
Too sternly fair for aught that dies,
Past is thy proud and pleasant state;
That recent date

When, strong and single, in thy sovereign heart,
The thrones of thinking, hearing, sight,
The cunning hand, the knotted thew
Of lesser powers that heave and hew,
And each the smallest beneficial part,
And merest pore of breathing, beat,
Full and complete,
The great pulse of thy generous might,
Equal in inequality,
That soul of joy in low and high ;
When not a churl but felt the Giant's heat,

Albeit he simply call'd it his,
Flush in his common labour with delight,
And not a village-Maiden's kiss
But was for this
More sweet,
And not a sorrow but did lightlier sigh,
And for its private self less greet,
The whilst that other so majestic self stood by !
Integrity so vast could well afford
To wear in working many a stain,
To pillory the cobbler vain
And license madness in a lord.
On that were all men well agreed ;
And, if they did a thing,
Their strength was with them in their deed,
And from amongst them came the shout of a
king !

But, once let traitor coward meet,
Not Heaven itself can keep its feet.
Come knave who said to dastard, ' Lo,
The Deluge ! ' which but needed ' No ! '
For all the Atlantic's threatening roar,
If men would bravely understand,
Is softly check'd for evermore
By a firm bar of sand.

But, dastard listening knave, who said,
‘ ’Twere juster were the Giant dead,
That so yon bawlers may not miss
To vote their own pot-belly’d bliss,
All that is past !
We saw the slaying, and were not aghast.
But ne’er a sun, on village Groom and Bride,
Albeit they guess not how it is,
At Easter or at Whitsuntide,
But shines less gay for this !

From The Unknown Eros

Peace

O England, how hast thou forgot,
In dullard care for undisturb'd increase
Of gold, which profits not,
The gain which once thou knew'st was for thy
peace !

Honour is peace, the peace which does accord
Alone with God's glad word :

' My peace I send you, and I send a sword.'

O England, how hast thou forgot,
How fear'st the things which make for joy, not
fear,

Confronted near.

Hard days ? 'Tis what the pamper'd seek to
buy

With their most willing gold in weary lands.
Loss and pain risk'd ? What sport but under-
stands

These for incitements ! Suddenly to die,
With conscience a blurr'd scroll ?

The sunshine dreaming upon Salmon's height

Is not so sweet and white
As the most heretofore sin-spotted soul
That darts to its delight
Straight from the absolution of a faithful fight.
Myriads of homes unloosen'd of home's bond,
And fill'd with helpless babes and harmless
 women fond ?

Let those whose pleasant chance
Took them, like me, among the German towns,
After the war that pluck'd the fangs from
 France,

With me pronounce
Whether the frequent black, which then array'd
Child, wife, and maid,
Did most to magnify the sombreness of grief,
Or add the beauty of a staid relief
And freshening foil
To cheerful-hearted Honour's ready smile !

 Beneath the heroic sun
Is there then none
Whose sinewy wings by choice do fly
In the fine mountain-air of public obloquy,
To tell the sleepy mongers of false ease
That war's the ordained way of all alive,
And therein with goodwill to dare and thrive

Is profit and heart's peace ?

But in his heart the fool now saith :

‘ The thoughts of Heaven were past all finding
out,

Indeed, if it should rain

Intolerable woes upon our Land again,

After so long a drought ! ’

‘ Will a kind Providence our vessel whelm,
With such a pious Pilot at the helm ? ’

‘ Or let the throats be cut of pretty sheep
That care for nought but pasture rich and
deep ? ’

‘ Were ’t Evangelical of God to deal so foul
a blow

At people who hate Turks and Papists so ? ’

‘ What, make or keep

A tax for ship and gun,

When ’tis full three to one

Yon bully but intends

To beat our friends ? ’

‘ Let’s put aside

Our costly pride.

Our appetite’s not gone

Because we’ve learn’d to doff

Our caps, where we were used to keep them on.’

' If times get worse,
We've money in our purse,
And Patriots that know how, let who will scoff,
To buy our perils off.
Yea, blessed in our midst
Art thou who lately didst,
So cheap,
The old bargain of the Saxon with the Dane.'¹

Thus in his heart the fool now saith ;
And, lo, our trusted leaders trust fool's luck,
Which, like the whale's 'mazed chine,
When they thereon were mulling of their wine,
Will some day duck.

Remnant of Honour, brooding in the dark
Over your bitter cark,
Staring, as Rispah stared, astonied seven days,
Upon the corpses of so many sons,
Who loved her once,
Dead in the dim and lion-haunted ways,
Who could have dreamt
That times should come like these !
Prophets, indeed, taught lies when we were
young,
And people loved to have it so ;

¹ The Alabama Treaty.

For they teach well who teach their scholars'
tongue !

But that the foolish both should gaze,
With feeble, fascinated face,
Upon the wan crest of the coming woe,
The billow of earthquake underneath the seas,
And sit at ease,
Or stand agape,
Without so much as stepping back to 'scape,
Mumbling, ' Perchance we perish if we stay :
'Tis certain wear of shoes to stir away ! '

Who could have dreamt
That times should come like these !
Remnant of Honour, tongue-tied with con-
tempt,

Consider ; you are strong yet, if you please.
A hundred just men up, and arm'd but with
a frown,

May hoot a hundred thousand false loons down,
Or drive them any way like geese.

But to sit silent now is to suborn
The common villainy you scorn.

In the dark hour

When phrases are in power,
And nought's to choose between

The thing which is not and which is not seen,
One fool, with lusty lungs,
Does what a hundred wise, who hate and hold
 their tongues,
Shall ne'er undo.
In such an hour,
When eager hands are fetter'd and too few,
And hearts alone have leave to bleed,
Speak ; for a good word then is a good deed.

From The Unknown Eros

Regina Cæli

Say, did his sisters wonder what could Joseph
see

In a mild, silent little Maid like thee ?

And was it awful, in that narrow house,

With God for Babe and Spouse ?

Nay, like thy simple, female sort, each one

Apt to find Him in Husband and in Son,

Nothing to thee came strange in this.

Thy wonder was but wondrous bliss :

Wondrous, for, though

True Virgin lives not but does know,

(Howbeit none ever yet confess'd,)

That God lies really in her breast,

Of thine He made His special nest !

And so

All mothers worship little feet,

And kiss the very ground they've trod ;

But, ah, thy little Baby sweet

Who was indeed thy God !

From Amelia and Other Poems

Auras of Delight

Beautiful habitations, auras of delight !
Who shall bewail the crags and bitter foam
And angry sword-blades flashing left and right
Which guard your glittering height,
That none thereby may come !
The vision which we have
Revere we so,
That yet we crave
To foot those fields of ne'er-profaned snow ?
I, with heart-quake,
Dreaming or thinking of that realm of Love,
See, oft, a dove
Tangled in frightful nuptials with a snake ;
The tortured knot,
Now, like a kite scant-weighted, flung be-
witch'd
Sunwards, now pitch'd,
Tail over head, down, but with' no taste got
Eternally
Of rest in either ruin or the sky,

But bird and vermin each incessant strives,
With vain dilaceration of both lives,
'Gainst its abhorred bond insoluble,
Coveting fiercer any separate hell
Than the most weary Soul in Purgatory
On God's sweet breast to lie.
And, in this sign, I con
The guerdon of that golden Cup, fulfill'd
With fornications foul of Babylon,
The heart where good is well-perceiv'd and
 known,
Yet is not will'd ;
And Him I thank, who can make live again,
The dust, but not the joy we once profane,
That I, of ye,
Beautiful habitations, auras of delight,
In childish years and since had sometime sense
 and sight,
But that ye vanish'd quite,
Even from memory,
Ere I could get my breath, and whisper ' See ! '
 But did for me
They altogether die,
Those trackless glories glimps'd in upper
 sky ?

Were they of chance, or vain,
Nor good at all again
For curb of heart or fret?
Nay, though, by grace,
Lest, haply, I refuse God to His face,
Their likeness wholly I forget,
Ah, yet,
Often in straits which else for me were ill,
I mind me still
I *did* respire the lonely auras sweet,
I *did* the blest abodes behold, and, at the
 mountain's feet,
Bathed in the holy Stream by Hermon's thymy
 hill.

From The Unknown Eros

Sponsa Dei

What is this Maiden fair,
The laughing of whose eye
Is in man's heart renew'd virginity ;
Who yet sick longing breeds
For marriage which exceeds
The inventive guess of Love to satisfy
With hope of utter binding, and of loosing
 endless dear despair ?
What gleams about her shine,
More transient than delight and more divine !
If she does something but a little sweet,
As gaze towards the glass to set her hair,
See how his soul falls humbled at her feet !
Her gentle step, to go or come,
Gains her more merit than a martyrdom ;
And, if she dance, it doth such grace confer
As opes the heaven of heavens to more than her,
And makes a rival of her worshipper.
To die unknown for her were little cost !
So is she without guile,

Her mere refused smile
Makes up the sum of that which may be lost !
Who is this Fair
Whom each hath seen,
The darkest once in this bewailed dell,
Be he not destin'd for the glooms of hell ?
Whom each hath seen
And known, with sharp remorse and sweet, as
 Queen
And tear-glad Mistress of his hopes of bliss,
Too fair for man to kiss ?
Who is this only happy She,
Whom, by a frantic flight of courtesy,
Born of despair
Of better lodging for his Spirit fair,
He adores as Margaret, Maude, or Cecily ?
And what this sigh,
That each one heaves for Earth's last lowlihead
And the Heaven high
Ineffably lock'd in dateless bridal-bed ?
Are all, then, mad, or is it prophecy ?
' Sons now we are of God,' as we have heard,
' But what we shall be hath not yet appear'd.'
O, Heart, remember thee,
That Man is none,

Save One.

What if this Lady be thy Soul, and He
Who claims to enjoy her sacred beauty be,
Not thou, but God ; and thy sick fire
A female vanity,
Such as a Bride, viewing her mirror'd charms,
Feels when she sighs, ' All these are for his
arms ! '

A reflex heat
Flash'd on thy cheek from His immense desire,
Which waits to crown, beyond thy brain's
conceit,
Thy nameless, secret, hopeless longing sweet,
Not by-and-by, but now,
Unless deny Him thou !

From The Unknown Eros

The Child's Purchase

A PROLOGUE

As a young Child, whose Mother, for a
jest,

To his own use a golden coin flings down,
Devises blythe how he may spend it best,
Or on a horse, a bride-cake, or a crown,
Till, wearied with his quest,
Nor liking altogether that nor this,
He gives it back for nothing but a kiss,
Endow'd so I

With golden speech, my choice of toys to buy,
And scanning power and pleasure and renown,
Till each in turn, with looking at, looks vain,
For her mouth's bliss,
To her who gave it give I it again.

Ah, Lady elect,
Whom the Time's scorn has saved from its
respect,
Would I had art

For uttering this which sings within my heart !
But, lo,

Thee to admire is all the art I know.

My Mother and God's ; Fountain of miracle !

Give me thereby some praise of thee to tell

In such a Song

As may my Guide severe and glad not wrong

Who never spake till thou'dst on him conferr'd

The right, convincing word !

Grant me the steady heat

Of thought wise, splendid, sweet,

Urged by the great, rejoicing wind that rings

With draught of unseen wings,

Making each phrase, for love and for delight,

Twinkle like Sirius on a frosty night !

Aid thou thine own dear fame, thou only Fair,

At whose petition meek

The Heavens themselves decree that, as it were,

They will be weak !

Thou Speaker of all wisdom in a Word,
Thy Lord !

Speaker who thus could'st well afford

Thence to be silent ;—ah, what silence that

Which had for prologue thy ' Magnificat ? '—

O, Silence full of wonders

More than by Moses in the Mount were heard,
 More than were utter'd by the Seven Thunders ;
 Silence that crowns, unnoted, like the voiceless
 blue,

The loud world's varying view,
 And in its holy heart the sense of all things
 ponders !

That acceptably I may speak of thee,
Ora pro me !

Key-note and stop
 Of the thunder-going chorus of sky-Powers ;
 Essential drop
 Distill'd from worlds of sweetest-savour'd
 flowers

To anoint with nuptial praise
 The Head which for thy Beauty doff'd its
 rays,

And thee, in His exceeding glad descending,
 meant,

And Man's new days
 Made of His deed the adorning accident !
 Vast Nothingness of Self, fair female Twin
 Of Fulness, sucking all God's glory in !

(Ah, Mistress mine,
 To nothing I have added only sin,

And yet would shine !)

Ora pro me !

Life's cradle and death's tomb !
 To lie within whose womb,
 There, with divine self-will infatuate,
 Love-captive to the thing He did create,
 Thy God did not abhor,
 No more
 Than Man, in Youth's high spousal-tide,
 Abhors at last to touch
 The strange lips of his long-procrastinating
 Bride ;
 Nay, not the least imagined part as much !
Ora pro me !

My Lady, yea, the Lady of my Lord,
 Who didst the first descry
 The burning secret of virginity,
 We know with what reward !
 Prism whereby
 Alone we see
 Heav'n's light in its triplicity ;
 Rainbow complex
 In bright distinction of all beams of sex,
 Shining for aye
 In the simultaneous sky,

To One, thy Husband, Father, Son, and
 Brother,
 Spouse blissful, Daughter, Sister, milk-sweet
 Mother ;

Ora pro me !

Mildness, whom God obeys, obeying thy-
 self

Him in thy joyful Saint, nigh lost to sight
 In the great gulf
 Of his own glory and thy neighbour light ;
 With whom thou wast as else with husband
 none

For perfect fruit of inmost amity ;
 Who felt for thee
 Such rapture of refusal that no kiss
 Ever seal'd wedlock so conjoint with bliss ;
 And whose good singular eternally
 'Tis now, with nameless peace and vehemence.
 To enjoy thy married smile,
 That mystery of innocence ;
Ora pro me !

Sweet Girlhood without guile,
 The extreme of God's creative energy ;
 Sunshiny Peak of human personality ;
 The world's sad aspirations' one Success ;

Bright Blush, that sav'st our shame from shame-
lessness ;

Chief Stone of stumbling ; Sign built in the way
To set the foolish everywhere a-bray ;

Hem of God's robe, which all who touch are
heal'd ;

To which the outside Many honour yield
With a reward and grace

Unguess'd by the unwash'd boor that hails
Him to His face,

Spurning the safe, ingratiant courtesy
Of suing Him by thee ;

Ora pro me !

Creature of God rather the sole than first ;
Knot of the cord

Which binds together all and all unto their
Lord ;

Suppliant Omnipotence ; best to the worst ;
Our only Saviour from an abstract Christ
And Egypt's brick-kilns, where the lost crowd
plods,

Blaspheming its false Gods ;

Peace-beaming Star, by which shall come
enticed,

Though nought thereof as yet they weet,

Unto thy Babe's small feet,
 The Mighty, wand'ring disemparadised,
 Like Lucifer, because to thee
 They will not bend the knee ;
Ora pro me !

Desire of Him whom all things else desire !
 Bush aye with Him as He with thee on fire !
 Neither in His great Deed nor on His throne—
 O, folly of Love, the intense
 Last culmination of Intelligence,—
 Him seem'd it good that God should be alone !
 Basking in unborn laughter of thy lips,
 Ere the world was, with absolute delight
 His Infinite reposed in thy Finite ;
 Well-matched : He, universal being's Spring,
 And thou, in whom art gather'd up the ends
 of everything !

Ora pro me !

In season due, on His sweet-fearful bed,
 Rock'd by an earthquake, curtain'd with eclipse,
 Thou shar'd'st the rapture of the sharp spear's
 head,
 And thy bliss pale
 Wrought for our boon what Eve's did for our
 bale ;

Thereafter, holding a little thy soft breath,
 Thou underwent'st the ceremony of death ;
 And, now, Queen-Wife,
 Sitt'st at the right hand of the Lord of Life,
 Who, of all bounty, craves for only fee
 The glory of hearing it besought with smiles
 by thee !

Ora pro me ! [ways,

Mother, who lead'st me still by unknown
 Giving the gifts I know not how to ask,
 Bless thou the work
 Which, done, redeems my many wasted days,
 Makes white the murk,
 And crowns the few which thou wilt not dis-
 praise,
 When clear my Songs of Lady's graces rang,
 And little guess'd I 'twas of thee I sang !

Vainly, till now, my pray'rs would thee compel
 To fire my verse with thy shy fame, too long
 Shunning world-blazon of well-ponder'd song ;
 But doubtful smiles, at last, 'mid thy denials lurk ;
 From which I spell,
 ' Humility and greatness grace the task
 Which he who does it deems impossible ! '

From The Unknown Eros

A Retrospect

I trusting that the truly sweet
Would still be sweetly found the true,
Sang, darkling, taught by heavenly heat,
Songs which were wiser than I knew.
To the unintelligible dream
That melted like a gliding star,
I said : ' We part to meet, fair Gleam !
You are eternal, for you *are*.'
To Love's strange riddle, fiery writ
In flesh and spirit of all create,
' Mocker,' I said, ' of mortal wit,
Me you shall not mock. I can wait.'

1886.

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